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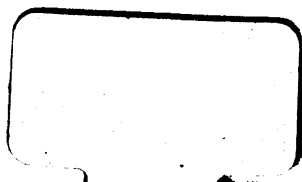


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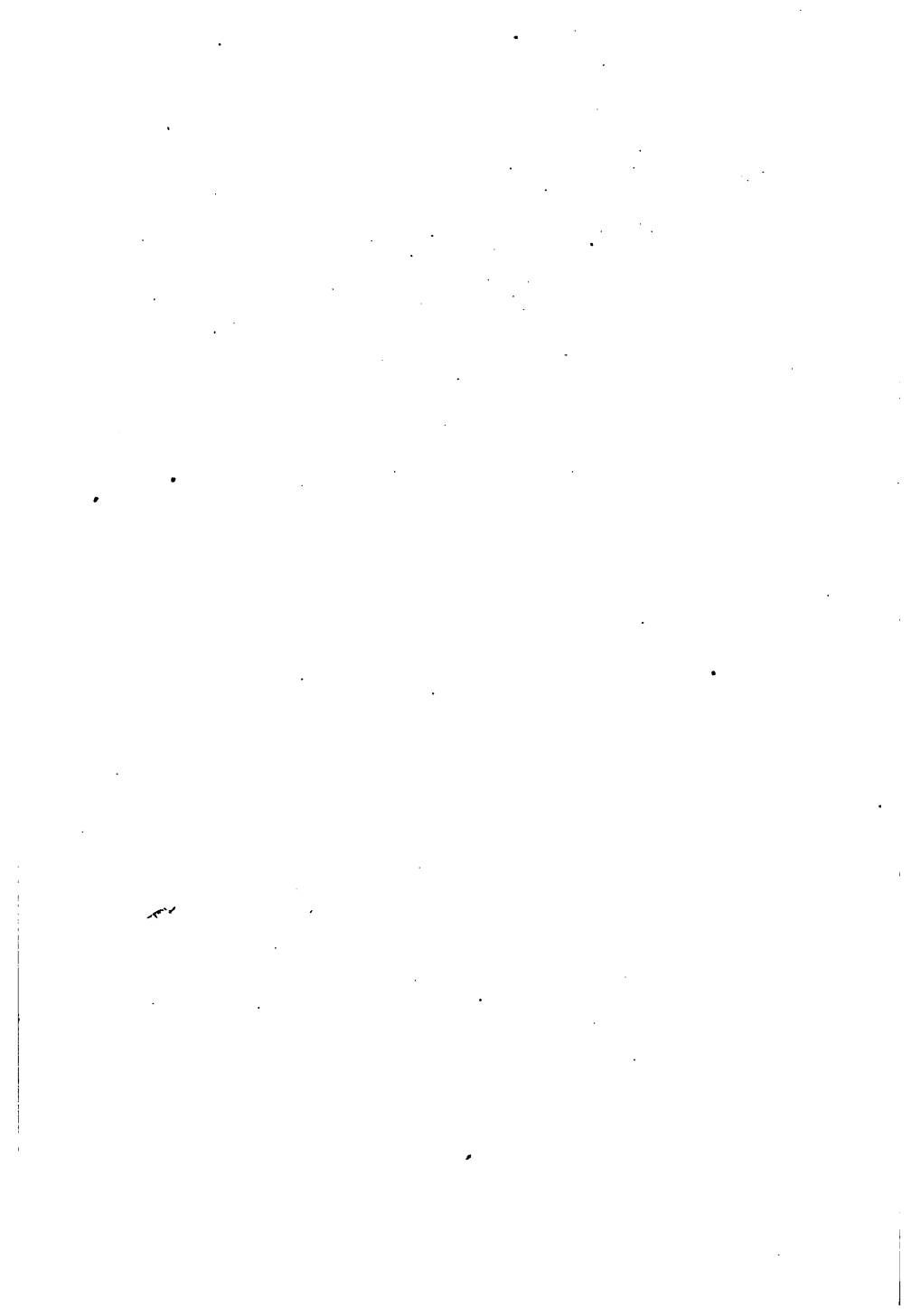
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Bertha G. Davidson

"COME WHAT MAY, I WILL TELL WHAT I AM, AND TAKE THE  
CONSEQUENCES."  
—Leo Dayne.





# LEO DAYNE

*A NOVEL*

BY

MARGARET AUGUSTA KELLOGG



BOSTON  
JAMES H. WEST COMPANY  
1899

KE 3820



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DEDICATED

To My Mother

WHO IN LIFE WAS MY HELPER

AND

WHO BEING DEAD YET LIVES



The noblest things in life are mixed with the most ignoble, great pretence with infinite substance, vainglory with solidness. The fool of one moment the martyr of the next: . . . A man has mistaken the secret of human life who does not look for greatness in the midst of folly, for sparks of nobility in the midst of meanness; and the well-poised mind distributes with impartiality the praise and the blame.—*J. Henry Shorthouse, in "John Inglesant."*

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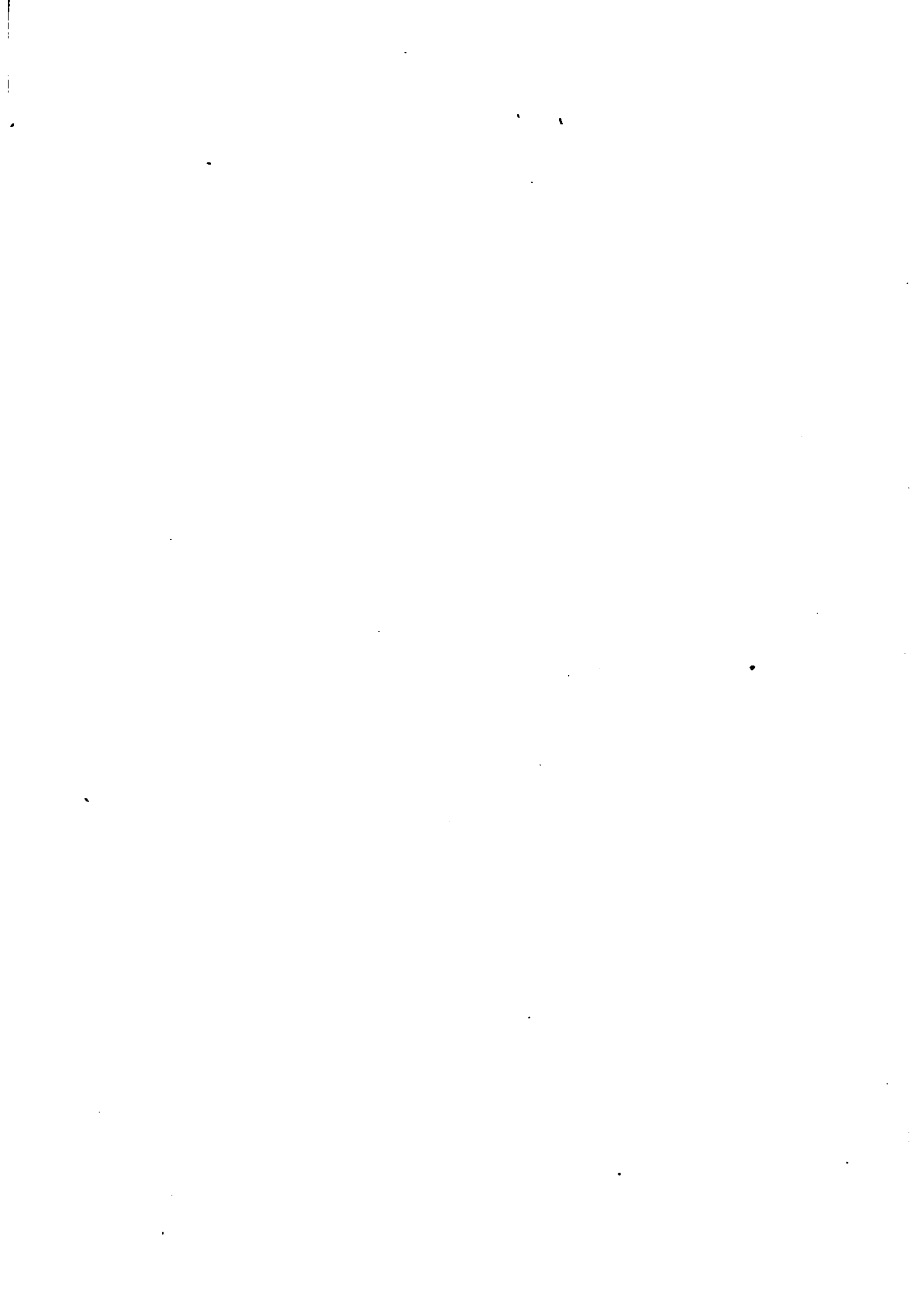
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# LEO DAYNE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A LITTLE ASSISTANCE.

"THIS," proceeded Mr. Small, after having discharged sundry inexplicable compliments at the man before him in the invalid-chair, "is the opinion of the whole town; — and it's *my* opinion," added as though Mr. Small were very separate indeed from the whole town.

Between the speaker's elevated eyebrows and thick shoulders there appeared to be some connection; for the eyebrows never went down and the shoulders never went down.

"We esteem you highly — very highly," he continued; "and because we esteem you highly, we — In fact, I am sent to offer you — as a *token* of esteem — a little — assistance."

Having been, previous to this, in deep unrest, and having at last wrought up his courage to firing the long-planned necessary though hurting shot, the deputy of the whole town sank into a state of relief on his own account, which was immediately followed by one of anxiety on account of the wounded.

The large, white, bony hands of the party addressed, looking larger, whiter, and more bony by reason of the evening lamplight on them, fluttered helplessly, as though

seized with a spasm of pain; and to him who has eyes to see, the involuntary movements of hands say much.

Mr. Small looked pityingly and inquiringly at Mr. Dayne, as an assassin for principle and not for spite might at his victim; and Mr. Small's square little dog, with a square head, square nose, square ears, square intentions, and a tan-colored rim under each eye as though he had stained himself by weeping many tears of that hue, arose and stood before the sick man, gazing up at him concernedly, and finally tendered him his support by lying down with an air of permanency close to the side of the invalid-chair.

Mr. Dayne returned Mr. Small's look as one who struggles to continue looking and to make the expected answer. Then, as though dominated by a stronger will or yielding to the power of a magnet, he slowly turned his face, flushed with the pathetic hectic of consumption and lit with its shining eyes, and now wearing an expression of feeble questioning, toward his wife.

Before either spoke Mr. Small hastened to apply lint. Now Mr. Small was not small, though one was liable to forget, in contemplating his jutting forehead, like projecting eaves, bulging from under its fringe of oily red hair, that he was anything but a forehead, of total independence. This liability was increased because the unctuous hurricane which apparently blew upon him at all times from the rear and drove his hair straight forward — hair parted in a white line down the middle behind — had at some past period started his roof, so to speak, out of position, where it now hung, in jeopardy of a fall and pale with fright.

His forehead appeared the more prominent, too, because his bushy side-whiskers, unable to resist the gale which affected his hair, had been driven round, roots and all, until they enveloped the lower portion of his countenance

in hopeless mystery, and, overstepping the bounds supposed to have been set to man's hirsute face-covering, were ambitiously creeping up Mr. Small's cheeks, and reconnoitering with envious longing the still unsubdued territory occupied by his very eyes and nose.

The lint which the gentleman hastened to apply was that sentiment which he had painfully prepared for this occasion, and which appeared to him extremely beautiful and ever new :

"It's as a token of esteem — wholly. You've ben sick the greater part o' the last five years; and your neighbors know, and I know," — Mr. Small again separating himself from his townsmen, — "that you've worked wen you'd 'a' ben better off in bed; and you can't stand at the bench again — not at present; though that's not saying you never will."

Having gone out of his way to encourage Mr. Dayne with this remark, and perceiving no unpleasant suggestion therein, Mr. Small paused, well pleased with himself.

After allowing time enough for his words, with all that they were designed to hint of recovered health and prosperity, to take full effect, he continued :

"And seeing you didn't — and 'tisn't everybody that can, of course — plan, in your younger days, for sickness, by setting up for yourself, and employing instead of working, so's to have it yielding now—"

Mr. Small almost added "as I did," but brought himself to a stop in season, and, with well-meant clumsiness, wheeled about and ran back past the fork in the road where he took the wrong turn, and started over again :

"But 'tisn't everybody that can. It isn't for every man to be the artitect of his own fortune; so what I said is not applicable."

Mr. Small tried to subdue himself, and not to feel conspicuously flourishing in the presence of adversity ;



but one prosperous through his own effort and prudence must take heed lest, when he would be kind, the ever-present remembrance of his own success and the ever-ready allusion to his own enterprise thwart him. The sense of his thriving condition filled Mr. Small so completely that it would burst out of him all round, like a boy out of an inadequate jacket.

Mr. Dayne, having received no information from the perusal of his wife's features, began — "It is true that we are poor, and —"

"No!" cried Mr. Small, coming to the rescue of Mr. Dayne from this idea, and beating it back as valorously as though it were a ruffian bent upon making an end of a man already down. "No! It ain't put in that light. We put it in the light of a token of esteem. Wholly," he added emphatically, raising his voice, as we are apt to do when we feel that our words are not in themselves strong or are not producing much effect, and clinging desperately and with an awkward result to his original plan of speech as though there could be no other — a danger which attends the making up of one's mind beforehand what one will say and allowing nothing for what may be said in response.

"Though," at length conceding a little, contrary to his general rule of not giving up anything, "if there's an objection to calling it a token of esteem, we can call it a wim of your friends." Mr. Small never wasted his breath on obscurely situated h's. "Besides, it's always ben a custom in town, you know, wen anybody's ben unfortunate."

"I'll admit," said Mr. Dayne, with a touch of pride, "that my neighbors think well of me; but I don't want anybody to suppose I'm ashamed to know why they sent you here. I want to be enough of a man to look the real reason in the face; though," he added hastily, fearing he

had been ungracious, "I understand their motives in not speaking it out — and am obliged; but they want to give me a token of their esteem because they know I need it."

Mr. Small gave up his point, perceiving at last that Mr. Dayne did not consider unavoidable poverty a thing to be concealed as if it were disgraceful, and that his own indelicacy had consisted in treating it as if it were.

Then he suddenly took a profound interest in the appearance of the room, furnished much like other "front" rooms of a New England country village, but with a certain unusual trimness about it.

"Although, to look round here, anybody wouldn't think there'd ben sickness in the family, which is due to you," turning his forehead upon Mrs. Dayne as accompaniment to the praise he had meant to bestow upon her, and thought he had bestowed, and illuminating himself with a smile which started somewhere under his whiskers, and was a smile so encouraging and intended to convey so much that its rays seemed to extend even beyond the circumference of the physiognomy they irradiated.

She, sitting apart at a stand that held the lamp, and stitching strongly together the parts of some woollen garment, had sewed steadily during this conversation — just as she sewed every evening, those not intimately familiar with her would have said; for such would not have noticed that her thread, drawn all the while as regularly as though her muscles were tapes of steel, was being jerked with such energy as to threaten a pucker, nor that she chewed fine, with suppressed nervous ferocity, a bitten-off particle of the seamed ball of wax lying by, nor that, while her face was controlled, tears which, for fear of attracting attention, she would not wipe away often rolled and fell.

His wife having been addressed, Mr. Dayne again

turned interrogatively to her, at the same time replying to the spirit and not the letter of Mr. Small's approval:

"Yes, she does a great deal; and since I gave up entirely, our only income has been from her work and — Emeline, what do you think we'd better say? I don't know whether we ought to take help while we are doing as well as we are; but, on the other hand," speaking to Mr. Small, "we appreciate the kindness, and if," looking again brokenly at Mrs. Dayne, "we can't accept as yet, it won't be because we're thankless; but —"

Again the appeal; for a character upon the whole strong may yet be dominated by a weaker (or coarser), because the weaker has a certain strength and the strong has a certain weakness, and the relations of the two are such that the strength of the one happens to be brought not against the strength of the other, but against its weakness. Sometimes a merely oppressive or pushing nature obtains such an ascendancy over a sensitive or loving one.

"You might let them do as they think best after they know what our feelings and circumstances are," said Mrs. Dayne, who abhorred openly usurping her husband's place, and always took pains, in public, to invest him with the ax and twigs of authority. "Mr. Small might tell them that we don't reject their help if they want to give it after they know that what I earn by the tailoring keeps us — in our way."

Her voice had not betrayed her.

"With what Leo helps — making all the buttonholes," added Mr. Dayne conscientiously.

Hereupon the twilight in a shadowy corner appeared to become alive, and to stir, and to shape itself into a slender, gray-tinted girl-ghost, which, disturbed and invoked by reference to itself, parted from its surrounding vapors and stood revealed.

We expect preternatural guests to come clad in apparitional raiment; but as this one advanced, hers was seen to be of nothing more nor less than washed-out checked gingham. Here, then, was no visitant from other spheres, though, to judge from her aspect now, her mode of existence should be different from that of other children. Has she been mysteriously struck into a statue of snow, while the others are left untouched? Can she really not move her cold fingers, that she holds them so stiffly upon the needle and scissors in them?

Scrutinizing her in mute marveling as she stands, one would almost bend a little nearer to see if any frost sparkle upon the skin—would almost breathe curiously upon the cheek as on the winter pane.

A veritable frozen child with power to walk could not have approached more unnaturally, pausing in the light, then slowly—as though contending with invisible hindrances—passing it, crossing the room, and going out at the door; as though come, like a displeased spirit, to protest against these doings, if the tongue were not fast in the set mouth.

## CHAPTER II.

### A GHOST'S REBELLION.

THE next morning's sun rose cheerful, undimmed by any premonitions that its bright looks could be answered by sour or sad ones. Not every member of that particular family of the common people with which this narrative chooses to concern itself rose in like frame, or with a similar pleasing confidence respecting the reception with which any brave assumption of good-spirits would meet; and, reckoning from the taciturnity that prevailed at their breakfast, no such confidence would have been justified.

Mrs. Dayne, having shed all her tears during the night, but being still miserable, reminded one of that most hopeless weather when, after a November storm, the sky remains cold and sullen and refuses either to rain or shine.

"Leo," who, now that we see her in the daylight, excites our wonder yet more than last evening, only that now we wonder how she could then have moved us to such wonder, proves to be but a lank girl of fourteen or thereabout, whose leanness is enhanced by the cut of the faded gingham. This, evidently made in haste, with small regard to the wearer's present size, but with generous provision for her future growth, loses her thin shoulders in its baggy yoke, and, gathered under a belt, falls straight and narrow to the ankles. The female

image of her father, her appearance would certainly be improved if her heavy hair were—like her mother's—combed.

This morning she is a carelessly dressed representation of—nothing; of passivity; except that she often puts her hand into her pocket, anxious to make sure that something she has there is not lost; and in fact her pocket contains, just now, her whole wealth. It has been long gathering, and is packed snugly and lovingly into a bit of a box, of handsome spotted wood and nice workmanship, made for her by her father, and gradually filled by him with coppers. These, when they count a hundred,—and they are close to the number,—are to be exchanged for that desideratum, a gold dollar, which is to be made infinitely more valuable to her by a puncture for ribbon, enabling “father's girl”—for she is recognized as the spiritual as well as physical copy of her father—to wear his present, always, round her neck.

No other coins could be half so precious to her, and her idea of their value bore no relation to their intrinsic worth; for they were from one who was, as she had once, long ago, amused him by saying,—gravely, as children will,—“an old friend” to her.

Mr. Dayne, like the other two, was silent; but silences are as different in their meanings as words. If his wife's indicated such a state of mind as her expression warranted attributing to her, and his daughter's that submission to older judgments which it is the lot of well-regulated children to accord, however grievously it may hurt, his meant uneasy concern for them, and self-upbraiding, which finally issued in a timid attempt to introduce a more agreeable temper.

“There's no reason, you know, Emeline, why we shouldn't reverse the decision we made last night, if you think best.”

"I don't."

"I didn't know but Leo's taking it so to heart might have changed your mind; though her plan of working more hours wouldn't do. She's growing round-shouldered now."

"Oh, father! I could, I would! I'd work all night, and almost on Sunday, if only you wouldn't let 'em give us anything. Oh, don't, don't! My heart is — scalded!" cried the girl, suddenly flaming up, like a covered fire, in the hope that, after all, her voice would prevail. "Do wait till we hear from Seth and Luke — they'll help us; and — father! You may use this. I'll give it to you," laying the box resolutely by the side of his plate.

Mr. Dayne, having first looked to his wife as though to the last court, said mildly, "The only way the boys can do anything for us is by taking care of themselves where they are — and behaving well. We'll wait another week before we begin to be really alarmed about them; but — I wish they had a home there. Your mother thinks it wouldn't be showing a right disposition for us to refuse help; — that is, altogether. It wouldn't be understood; and, instead of feeling so, I suppose we ought to be thankful that people respect us enough to do it."

"I'll never be thankful — never! And when I'm a woman, I'll work, and never stop, till I pay back everything they give us," and Leo burst into tears — not mild, decorous ones, but great, heart-broken sobs, a tempestuous, thorough-going explosion of grief.

The meal being over, and the daughter with her weeping — and work — gone into the room which had called forth Mr. Small's laudations, silence again reigned. Mr. Dayne did not, as usual, follow Leo and take his accustomed seat in the large chair, but lingered in the kitchen, which the streaming sun and a light fire for boiling the

coffee had made more comfortable for morning-time in Autumn than an unheated room. Perhaps, however, it was not so much for bodily as for mental comfort that he stayed.

Mrs. Dayne proceeded with her regular work, carrying the dishes to a back room and washing them there. Returning, broom in hand, she began to sweep.

Mr. Dayne, with the spotted box in his hand, infirmly rising to facilitate that operation, said, "Emeline, if I should — could — die, you and the rest would be better off."

No answer.

Then, as though she mistook it for a burr, Mrs. Dayne picked a yellow kitten from her dress-skirt, where it insisted upon climbing, and dropped it with the remark, "I wish Leo wouldn't make the house an asylum for all the homeless cats and everything else she sees."

Mr. Dayne smoothed, compensatingly, the unresentful little bunch of fur and claws.

"I am all that obliges you to keep the house. If I was gone you could sell it for more than the mortgage, and be easier. You would move where the boys are, too, and give them a home again. 'Twould be better for them; and Leo could go to school"—for she was considered the most apt of the children.

No answer.

"I think of it day and night. I am nothing but a burden to the very ones I ought to be only a help to. I'm — I'm — ashamed to live. It takes me a great while to die, and — I wish I could go faster."

No answer.

"You don't say anything, Emeline, and I sometimes think you wish so too."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Dayne, vigorously winging up the dust and going with it to the stove. Emptying the



pan and brushing in every scattered particle, she withdrew, with broom and other utensils, to the back room.

Her husband, looming tall, and bending a little, like a mammoth field-stalk, walked totteringly and with a despairing sigh in the direction of the room where Leo was, looking mechanically at the clock as he passed it, and saying, "It's 'most time for my morphine."

Alas! how many times before to-day had this man purposely drawn his wife into a similar conversation, tremblingly watching, hoping, for a single voluntary word in opposition to his self-accusations for being, by his continuance in the body, the sole hindrance to his family in their efforts to extricate themselves from the rapidly tightening pressure of poverty.

Mrs. Dayne had, for the most part, made no rejoinder. When he had, as now, forced her to speak unless she would give irrevocable consent to the idea that she wished him dead, it is true she had sometimes—perhaps often—said lightly, "You're ridiculous!" or, "You must be out of your head!" or, "I never heard anybody go on so!" She had even said, "I've told you that you're wrong, and you know it isn't my way to keep saying the same thing over and over again. I don't see any use in it. When I've said a thing once I think it ought to last and do as well as to repeat it. As long as you know, what more can you want? You can't any more than know, no matter how often you hear it. I can't imagine what good it does people to have the same thing continually harped in their ears!"

Thus Mrs. Dayne argued, perhaps with all honesty. At any rate, our fellow-creatures never do or fail to do anything without there being *a reason*, probably remote and unrecognized, for the doing or failing to do. To realize this helps our pity for those who perhaps must needs make the woes that perhaps must needs be. Still,

a yearning heart that cannot be wearied with asking or answering affection's "Lovest thou me?" never yet was satisfied with replies like these of Mrs. Dayne. Therefore her husband's heaviness had not been mitigated, nor the hungry, unearthly, part-desolate, part-desperate look in his eyes been softened.

People who have not much courage about dying rarely come, through pondering, to hold that, life having been thrust upon them, they may have the right to thrust it away. On the contrary, they can generally perceive with clearness that it is a "duty," under any circumstances, to live as long as they can, and "cowardly" to want not to do so, and have been known, in some cases, to make themselves tolerably easy in other people's way.

Judging from that look of Mr. Dayne, caught, perhaps, just as he was startled out of a reverie,—a look suggesting that in his thought he had been chased to the last confine, that he had reached the precipice where he must either cast himself down or fall into the hands of his overtaking pursuers,—he lacked this moral superiority and this proper confidence in his right to an unearned living which would have been so supporting in his lingering illness, and was foolish enough to feel himself, now that his hard-working hands were idle, an intruder in his own house, a hanger-on at his own table, and to allow this to be torture to his spirit.

That wild, tired, hunted look was upon him now, and in the intensity of a still resolve; for, after all, this man had a lion's savage strength about him that could rise up mightily at will; but no one was there who saw the look, no one who understood,—not then,—no one to whom he might confide his bitter sorrow.

## CHAPTER III.

### A SOUND SLEEPER.

It was later than usual that day — nearly noon — before Mrs. Dayne finished her housework.

As soon as possible, however, she joined her husband and daughter — not for the sake of their company, for solitude would doubtless have accorded better with her mood; but the sewing was where they were, and that must be done.

Although the two who had preceded her here were still in possession when she sat down, there was found no occasion for speech; for, under the soothing influence of his morning potion of morphine, the one adult had dropped into a sound sleep in his chair, his handkerchief folded over his necktie and shirt-front to protect them, just as he always wore it when working. As to Leo, she was never very talkative, but, according to her mother, sewed and “dreamed.” The spotted wooden box was on the window-seat near her. It had been returned by her father, with a few words that made it more precious than ever.

By this time the sun had somewhat withdrawn his early glances from the kitchen, and now, as was meet, bestowed his mature fervor upon the best of the house. It was a small habitation,—the justly to be expected “cottage,”—but built by no bungler; rich in its ingenious convenience, and containing more real “room” than

some mansions; compact, well-knit, with no barren tracts serving little purpose either of use or beauty; comparable not to a mere skeleton, but rather to the human frame duly clothed upon in every part with carefully fed, ruddy flesh.

When it is announced that Mr. Dayne planned this house, and built it himself, the worldly-wise will think they know how it happened to be so excellently made. A man can afford, it is said, to perform the best kind of labor when he himself is the one to benefit by it; but Mr. Dayne was, if possible, more painstaking for others than for himself. Everybody in town could tell you that he might have been independent now if he had been less "particular."

He never could let an article go till it was as good as he could make it; and it is well known that that sort of thing does not usually "pay"—in dollars. Mr. Dayne always knew it, and never had been in danger of falling into forgetfulness of it so long as his wife was by; for she loudly desired his performance to be as fine as he was fairly compensated for, and no finer.

The fact was that the man had an artist's nature, and he found a reward in his work entirely apart from what he received for it. He was aware that there were fields where his thoroughness and skill and taste—for he did not call himself more than a mechanic—would bring competence; but his lot had not been cast there. Besides, had it not been for his failing health he would have been in easy-enough circumstances just where he was.

Though only a cabinet-maker, Mr. Dayne could, if his neighbors were correct, "do 'most anything," and would do nothing poorly. Whatever left his hands showed that it had been made by a conscience and a pride, not merely by measure and money.

Some tools and pieces of wood now lay within reach, for, when not too weak, he still toiled as he sat waiting to die. There was often a sale for his much-polished knitting-pins, shuttles, hooks, and similar small articles, many kind-hearted women having had an uncommon need of these things since he had been too ill to work on anything else.

Now the sun has reached the implements, and the dazzling rays reflected from a knife-blade flash upward on to the white face of the sleeping artisan. Outside, in the street, a freckled hen talks contentedly to herself without having any visible ground for her extraordinary enjoyment of life.

The stillness of a warm October noonday is in the sunny house. There are no sounds but the snap of Mrs. Dayne's stitching, the ticking, low and muffled, of the kitchen clock, and Mr. Dayne's heavy breathing.

Listen! How long it is between those breathings! How strangely he sucks the air, drawing it in in a long, slow draught and expelling it in a quick gust, then waiting what seems many seconds before beginning again that peculiar, terrifying inhalation!

Perhaps he is worse. Has his wife been seized with her daughter's propensity for dreaming, that she does not notice those loud, singular breathings? However energetically she might repel the suggestion, it may be true.

Now the knife gleams obstinately up into *her* face, determined not to cease pricking her with faint insinuations of bad news. It annoys her. She gets up, crosses the room, and looks out. The trees are struck dead — their leaves do not stir. She draws the curtain and goes back to her sewing.

A stitch — a breath — a stitch — a breath. A bell begins to ring — the only one in town. It hangs in the

belfry of the meeting-house a little way off. Will Mr. Dayne's pew there, with its crickets and bookrack of his making, ever again have all the family in it?

Bells have, always, a thread of sadness in their voices. The custom was to have this one rung at noon. "It sounds like tolling," said Mrs. Dayne mentally. It stopped. Some men passed, as they always did, on their way home to dinner. One went into the house opposite—Mr. Thompson's.

The stitching and the breathing went on. At length, as one who, solitary, as he thinks, and absorbed in his own meditations, comes slowly to realize that a presence not his own is in the room, so there gradually pressed upon Mrs. Dayne a perception of something unusual, something feebly calling her thoughts back from that distant place—wherever it was—to which they had undeniably betaken themselves. She moves uneasily—she is coming back. Now, assisted by the triumphant knife, which the sun has reached again through another window, she struggles completely out into reality.

After taking his narcotic—a prized alleviation of his restlessness and suffering, but long used with sparing conscientiousness—Mr. Dayne often sleeps long; but now his wife goes over to him. The knife strikes her in the face with its shimmer. It continually obtrudes itself, as if, too full of demoniac joy to keep still, it boasted swaggeringly, "He often thought of me—me! But, for the sake of his family, he wanted secrecy, and so he chose my relative, Poison; but it's all one—all one!"

Mrs. Dayne merely sets the chair with the troublesome implement out of her way, and bends down over her husband. She does not immediately take alarm. She observes how long a time passes between those odd breathings. She counts. She wipes his forehead, which

is damp like a sweaty glass. His slumber is deep, for her action does not disturb him.

Had the eyes under those closed lids, seemingly never more to open, taken conscious farewell of the bright room and the familiar prospect out of window? Did there rush upon this man, only a little irrevocable while ago, a sense—such as comes in the view of near death to the most harassed of earth's creatures—of the preciousness of life? a sense of the numerousness of the ties which, after all, bind us to earth?

Perhaps no one will ever know; and, for once, uncertainty will be consolation. If he never gains the power to do his wife and daughter another kindness, he has left them the comfort of not knowing but it was all a mistake in measuring the medicine—the comfort of trying to believe he never meant it. Yes, and left his wife more to ponder in the privacy of her own bosom, and be silent about.

"Eben!" says Mrs. Dayne. Then louder, "Eben!"

In the waiting stillness the breathing goes slowly on, without a quiver of fluctuation.

"Eben!" cries the watcher, and vigorously shakes his arm, then waits. She has, as it were, rapped clamorously at the door of this dwelling of flesh. Perhaps the occupant is in some distant part and the summons does not yet find him. She stoops and listens. Everything remains as it was. No bustle occurs within. She raises herself slowly up at last, though keeping her eyes yet on the unmoved face, as one who, while walking away from the house at which he has sought entrance, still looks back, half expecting to be recalled.

"Leo," she said, without turning her head, and in a thick, crackling voice, as though it were a flame in the hot and ashy flue of a furnace, "go for the doctor—quick."

She spoke as if her daughter were sitting at the other side of the room. She did not know that, during the endeavors to arouse her husband, Leo had dropped her work, and, creeping nearer, as though under a horrible spell that deepened as the efforts proved vain, now stood behind her mother, with a face as white and stark as that beloved one which seemed to be fairly drawing out her startled, apprehensive eyes.

When, obeying the charge she had received, the girl found herself out-of-doors, her cold, perspiring hands were holding her hat, which, while she ran, she now put on as mechanically as she had caught it from its nail. She knew—felt—what had not been communicated to her in words: that something more—worse—than simple death overhung her father.

Under the shock of having help offered to them, she had been, as has been seen, like one stricken, paralyzed. Her heart had not yet begun to develop a shell—that useful protective covering matured much earlier in some individuals of our species than in others. She had even less defence of this kind than most girls of her age.

Of her brief life only a small portion had been spent at school. Her services had been required at home, at first to save her mother's time for sewing, and latterly, since she had been possessed of the ambition to take one of the most difficult parts,—the buttonholes,—to help with it directly. Hence she had come but little into contact with anybody outside of that home—a home over which a nameless shade and restraint had always brooded, making her sober and reflective, though she knew not that the home differed from other homes.

Somehow the children of her own years who, with scrubbed, shining faces and moist hair, were sent by thoughtful mothers to visit her on a Saturday afternoon did not prove to be companions for her nor she for



them — she was too “old of her age.” Her childishly assumed responsibilities had made her unlike them, with their free and careless and happy spirits.

Leo had heard of “charity” — of “suicide”; but in the leafy, dewy town, its quiet invaded by nothing more noisy than one or two grist and saw mills with their water-dam, and inhabited by outwardly contented farmers and mechanics not vexed by unsatisfied longings, the exercise of the first was rarely needed and the occurrence of the second almost unknown.

She had, however, seen a pauper — “the town pauper.” When she went to school — and carried off all the little prizes and praises off-hand — he had been in the habit of passing the building on his way to the store, no doubt to buy a little tobacco and have a chat with the early friends whom he would meet, or to sun himself, if in Summer, on the seat outside, perhaps dozing when the buzzing flies of the grocery permitted; for this lone, lame old townsman was in fact quite comfortable concerning his condition, and, not being afflicted with a sensitive soul, enjoyed existence about as other people enjoy it. Annually he was placed in boarding-quarters. If not pleased with them, — and he was rather particular, — he had the consolation of reflecting that they were not permanent, and of ruining the reputation of his keepers by reporting that he was not treated “like one of the family,” while, if satisfied, he often remained several years in one place.

Since Mr. Small’s visit (could it have been only last night?) Leo had thought much of this indigent person, now deceased. She had remembered how the school children, if out when he went by, had hooted and called him names. She, however, had always refrained, perhaps from a kind of selfishness, from joining in the impudence of her mates. Besides not being able to see any fun in

their persecutions, the mere sight of this deeply distressed being — she supposed him distressed — had pained her ignorantly tender feelings, and to have annoyed him would have caused her still greater suffering. Since last evening she had recalled, with a gasp of thankfulness at the escape, that she had never teased him.

The proffer the family had received, even if accepted, would not make them town charges, but it would make them receivers of charity; and with might and main Leo revolted. Her mind, thrown into commotion by that unexpected blow, had been in uproar ever since, and she had framed many a dignified rejection of succor and many a plan of herculean labors on her own part; but now the precursory disturbance had been followed by a hurricane.

As she sped, fiery-footed, through the crinkling noon-tide heat, past the basking houses, her wild thoughts heaved and tossed and tumbled over one another, and in a dazed way she whispered again and again, "Suicide is worse!" — meaning worse than a "token of esteem" — "Suicide is worse! Suicide is worse!" till, to her vivid imagination, the words formed themselves into airy rings, dancing and chasing one another round and round endlessly, like the "ribbon" made by whirling a burning stick.

She hardly knew whether these things appeared to her inward or outward vision. The roadside maples dropped whispering blood as she passed. She wondered whether anywhere, in all the towns stretching away under the sky, the gleaming spires of some of which could be seen across country, there was another with such a woe in it as this little one cornerwise on the map from Boston — the natural starting-point for New England reckonings of location.

Her impetuous feet were numb — she could not feel

them as she went; but they agitated, like a whiff of wind, the warm, puffy dust that lay inches deep where she ran,—she had not taken care to shun the middle of the white, drought-dried highway,—and it coiled and rolled after her like a wheel.

She noticed the signs on the few lazy stores, on Small's cabinet manufactory where her father used to work, on the tailor's shop where she often went in carrying and bringing the sewing, and on the postoffice. They had a new look to her. The sunshine, too, on them and on the cool velvet fields back of the houses, seemed different from what it ever had before. This was the first time her own mental state had changed for her the aspect of the natural world. It was not the last.

The village, at the other end of which stood Dr. White's house, was apparently fast asleep under the somniferous effect of warmth. The little dinner-time stir, occasioned by the business men—saddler, apothecary, two grocers, and a dozen or so cabinet-makers—going to and from the meal, was over, and there was nothing of life visible except a boy and a horse; the boy a small one, who greeted Leo, and stared at her with wide mouth, thus showing his one new, white tooth in the midst of his old, black ones; the horse—reined up in front of a store—one that could hardly be deemed an intrusion in the picture of repose, since, having partaken of a pailful of oats hung round his neck, he was now, to judge by his drooping head and slow winks, succumbing to the universal drowsiness, disturbed by no apprehension that his master would ever complete his purchases and demand action of his beast.

The doctor's house was dignified with the rather unusual elegance of a bell, which Leo now rang, listening confusedly to its loud and jangling alarm just on the other side of the door.

## CHAPTER IV.

### TWO CHARACTERS IN ONE.

STARTING on her errand to the doctor's, Leo had scarcely lit upon the street and fled as might a racked spirit hurled out of hell by the whirling force of some new torture, when the door of the house opposite her father's opened, and there issued a portly figure very unlike the one that was now flitting out of view.

Mrs. Thompson—a woman who, as she said, always took the “premium” on bread at the county fair—had been meaning all the morning to go into Mr. Dayne's after dinner. She wanted to be neighborly in their time of trouble, and not stay away just after the project on foot had been revealed to them, as if she dreaded to see them because she suspected they would feel badly. She thought it was best to behave as though nothing had happened, and, “if anything was said,” to act as if donations were every-day occurrences.

This was the cleanly matron's kind intention. Yet she had another—to find out how the Daynes were really affected by the offer of assistance they had received. She may not have been hard-hearted, if inquisitive, in thus desiring to look into their fresh wounds. “We have all more than one character, and it is generally quite impossible to say which is the true one.” Not on any account would she have alluded openly to these wounds, but she thought she could hide her chief object by maneuvers of speech which, if practised on her, she would instantly have penetrated.

Having finished her after-dinner work—it was her ambition to do this before other housekeepers had fairly cleared their tables—and put on a new calico dress that still rustled pleasantly with its original starch, Mrs. Thompson was ready. Her hair having been made very smooth, she took bareheaded the few steps to Mr. Dayne's, holding up her roll of knitting as a shade. She had not observed Leo's flight.

In accordance with the informal customs of the neighborhood, Mrs. Thompson entered by the side door, thus coming into the kitchen. Here she found Mrs. Dayne, who had hurriedly brought kindlings, and was preparing to heat water, not indeed because she knew it would be needed, but because she *must* do something.

Her cheeks glowed and throbbed dryly, as though fire were just beneath the skin, and the agitated flush on her whole face and neck might have been the red light thrown from them; for, though neither the sight of the wretchedness she inflicted upon those about her, nor any pleadings or expostulations on their part, could induce her to come out before the fullness of time from one of her seasons of persistent moroseness or melancholy, such as she had been in since Mr. Small brought his message, still she was far enough from wishing to have a conscience accusing her of being, in ever so diluted a degree, a murderess.

These obscuring shadows in which Mrs. Dayne not infrequently enveloped herself had none of the evanescence of a cloud in the sky, but rather endured like the dyer's stain: no effort could remove them—time would wear them away.

Now, however, a startling event, like the magical counteractive chemical upon a blot, had touched them, and they had vanished. She had been unceremoniously stripped of her dismal investment, and very rudely

hustled out of the cheerless isolation wherefrom she would otherwise have emerged with slow and dignified gait.

Now her hurrying thoughts reviewed the past. Now her moral sense upbraided her. Now she saw things more clearly. Hitherto she had considered her husband silly in his eagerness for love; and that eagerness had wearied her. Now she saw how little it would have cost to give all he asked, and, with a gush of tenderness come too late, perceived how dear she might have made herself to him, how faithful an affection she had scorned,—an affection such as many a woman filled with hovering devotion has vainly spent herself to win,—how glumly she had accompanied him to his grave.

Her fits of gloom, which, if she had ever much reflected upon them, she had vaguely thought of as somehow a necessity to her, and very excusable in a woman with so much to contend against, she now saw divested of all glamour—saw them as simple vulgar ill-nature and wickedness, just like other people's ill-nature and wickedness. "Be angry and sin not" had been an oft-quoted scripture with her, and by it she had justified herself in her moodiness so long as she did not fret and complain aloud. Now all that defence was swept away.

"Why!" exclaimed Mrs. Thompson. "Are you just gettin' dinner?"—which was quite as likely as not to be the case, for Mrs. Dayne never paid much attention to feeding herself or anybody else; and, as a consequence, cold "bites" and irregular meals were the rule in the Dayne home. "If I'd known that, I wouldn't have come so early; but I'll go in and see Mr. Dayne a minute. How is he to-day?"

"He's asleep now, so you'd better sit here; though I suppose you would enjoy yourself more to come in some

other time. A hot fire's uncomfortable such a day as this."

Mrs. Dayne had, one might say, withdrawn from her caller's sight. As one detected in the prosecution of work which he would keep secret hastily covers it, and turns, with what composure he can muster, to receive and converse with the intruder,—howbeit his discomposed mind with difficulty holds itself to that task, howbeit his preoccupied brain apprehends but laboriously the drift of the commonplaces addressed to him,—so now Mrs. Dayne faced her visitor, screening her consternation, her tense listening for a movement in that blighted other room, her nervous anticipation of the doctor's coming,—her true self,—behind another self, a shielding double, which she put forward and turned about this way and that to meet and parry Mrs. Thompson. This unreal self attended and automatically gave proper answers, while back of it the real self continued alarmed, straining, and expectant as before.

"I don't object to the warmth," said Mrs. Thompson, "though it is perishin' weather—for the season. I've had a bad cold for a week."

Then, sitting down, she began an examination of the probabilities respecting the time and place of contracting the said disturbance to her system.

A pause ensued.

She resumed: "I s'pose you hain't heard from the boys?"

"No," answered the automaton.

"Well, I shouldn't be down-hearted about that. They're young yet; and at night they're probably out enjoyin' themselves, and don't get much time to write. Bein' so near the city, too. There's always somethin' goin' on. 'Twould tire me to death, as I told my cousin. There's nothin' I could wish to live there for, except

bein' near my church." Mrs. Thompson meant the Episcopal Church, which she had attended in her childhood and had never quite forgotten. "I guess there's been consid'able change since you've been there"—this with a little superiority, and in allusion to the circumstance that before her marriage Mrs. Dayne had spent much time with relatives then living in the New England city referred to, while Mrs. Thompson had made a single and momentous visit to it more recently. "And then," she concluded, reverting to the late strange tardiness in correspondence on the part of the Dayne boys, "it's altogether different from what it would be if they had—well, any business to write about. Everybody's apt to put off letters when there's nothin' particular to say—or send; and I s'pose it'll be some time yet before they'll be able to do much more than pay their own way, won't it?"

"Yes."

Round about every large city spreads a region much influenced by it. Generally those within this sphere, having more matters of an impersonal sort to occupy their attention, take a less absorbing interest in the minutiae of other men's affairs. Mrs. Thompson having lived outside the outermost ring of such an influence, her familiarity with the concerns of others was not surprising.

Besides, although the Daynes were inclined to be "close," that is, uncommunicative, especially about their circumstances,—for how was it learned that they were poor except as people knew "they must be"?—they never had made any secret of the reasons why and the means through which their sons had obtained a distant situation as apprentices.

When the time had come for Seth and Luke to begin life for themselves (their names had been chosen by



their mother from the Old and New Testaments), Mrs. Dayne had written, of course in her husband's name, to Mr. Charles Brackett, a native of the little village where the Daynes still had their home. He had been her school-fellow, and had early pushed out to seek his fortune. He had found it in the before-mentioned city, which—because this is as far as possible from being its name—we will call Trenburg. Leo transcribed the letter, because she excelled in copy-book penmanship. (The mother had named the boys: Mr. Dayne had insisted on naming the daughter, and had called her Leonora—a sentimental choice, in his wife's opinion, and sure to be nicknamed.)

Both of the Dayne boys had a predilection for machinery, and Mr. Charles Brackett had found his fortune in that or some allied line. Applying to him was a mere venture. He might have forgotten his early mates, or have become indifferent through the "care of this world," or have grown pompous under the "deceitfulness of riches"; but it might lead to what was wanted. To be sure, the boys might have gone to their uncle in the West—Mr. Dayne's brother; but, in the present state of their father's health, that was too far away.

Rather to the surprise and greatly to the delight of the Daynes, Mr. Charles Brackett had cordially and chattily responded that he would do what he could. "I have a friend," he wrote, "who will, I think, be glad to receive into his shop boys of such parentage, as he is often obliged to take less desirable applicants. I will consult him and inform you of the result."

As a consequence of the promised negotiations, Luke and Seth had, six months before, gone for the first time far from home, and taken up their residence in a town which—again because this is as far as possible from being its name—we will call Brackton, one of the

suburbs of Trenburg; the manufactory of Mr. Brackett's friend being outside the metropolis.

The brothers had written regularly and cheerfully until a short time since; but now no answers were received to the anxious letters dispatched from home, and so their mother had at last sent inquiries to Mr. Brackett, whose reply was daily expected.

As such information could have been obtained anywhere in the neighborhood, perhaps Mrs. Thompson should not be charged, at least on account of her knowledge of these matters, with having a disagreeably inquiring turn of mind. She was about to begin again when Mrs. Dayne, by hastening out to meet a step the sound of which she had caught, left her alone.

Leo had returned, bringing no doctor. She had found him gone. Now she received whispered directions to run to the only other physician, a comparatively late comer in town.

"What if he should be gone?" Leo asked, also in a whisper, for a sense of secrecy always inclines one to lower the voice, even if there is no need of it.

The question was pertinent. There was not much time for hesitation and scruples. Dr. Stevenson had with him an ambitious medical student from the next town.

"The young fellow'll be there. If the doctor is away, ask *him* if he knows what to do for an overdose of morphine."

Upon Mrs. Dayne's return Mrs. Thompson asked unhesitatingly, "Who was that?" and the automaton replied —

"It was Leo. I wanted her to do an errand."

"Well, you're so busy—and it is pretty warm here—I'll go home now and maybe I'll come in again by 'n' by."

Without hearing any expressions of regret at her going, or of desire that she would come back, Mrs. Thompson gradually and wordily withdrew, without suspecting that anything unusual in the household required her inspection. It was not her calm footsteps, therefore, that raised the detrimental dust she encountered as, intent on not disturbing that unpleasant attribute of earth, she tiptoed home again, but the scurrying ones of Leo, who darted by on her return from the near office of Dr. Stevenson.

"You go like all possessed!" exclaimed Mrs. Thompson in some displeasure. "I never saw the beat!"

Leo was already within the house, and out of hearing of the deprecatory remarks.

"For my part, I thank the Lord I never had any!" continued Mrs. Thompson, alluding to her childlessness. "What under the light o' the suns"—Mrs. Thompson always spoke as if our globe were shone upon by several luminaries instead of one—"anybody wants of 'em is more'n I know; as I tell Thompson."

The medical student had mentioned to Leo some simple domestic stimulants. He had mentioned them with not a little asperity, resulting from injured pride at the offensive form of her honest question, "Do you know yet what to do for an overdose of morphine?"—offensive because suggesting that there might be something in the study of medicine still unattained to by him, and also because he believed she had been sent by certain tormentors of his who desired to put his knowledge to the test by a case of fictitious urgency.

Leo, however, was too intent on the answer to mind the asperity, and her haste to communicate the information had caused her to raise a lamentable smother about Mrs. Thompson's immaculate person.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE DUMB DOCTOR.

THE powdery cloud that smoked behind Leo's precipitous feet as if their every flying touch had left a spark to set the whole parched street roaring and blazing behind her, and the slight dust of temper which this incendiarism had raised in Mrs. Thompson's spiritual house, had long subsided; for now that lady's fleckless, white-painted earthly domicile—with its blinds as fresh and green as a June bud, and over the parlor windows folded as tightly—was reflecting from dazzling pane and glistening board the last beams of the west.

The closing of a year, of a season,—especially Summer,—yes, even of a day, is apt to suggest thoughts, pensive thoughts, thoughts hard to describe, relative to the human state and destiny, relative to its mystery and pathos.

Let it not be supposed that this reflection is preliminary to the announcement of Mr. Dayne's decease. He had survived the afternoon, and, it appeared, was not dying now with the day. He was in his room, lying dressed on the outside of the bed, with waistcoat and shirt-collar thrown back, just as he would have been after any usual attack of bleeding.

Ever-reticent Dr. White sat close by—the dumb doctor, as he had once been called by an exasperated mother whose whole being had formed itself into a

mighty unanswered question as to the exact name of the baby's indisposition. The patient's eyes occasionally opened, when the physician always hastened to examine them, not resuming his seat until they closed.

The irascible student's directions had been carried out with excited vigor by Mrs. Dayne, and had partially restored her husband before the medical man's arrival, which was brought about by another message, carried by Leo, to the effect that his attendance was needed as soon as he returned.

Towns of this sort being possessed of the desirable accomplishment of sleeping with one eye open even amid noontide sultriness, it was of course known that Mr. Dayne was worse. Mrs. Thompson, the nearest neighbor, whom a merciful Providence had detained indoors during the afternoon, did not, however, learn the surprising fact till her husband came home.

Since the invalid had survived so many hemorrhages, this supposed latest one occasioned no particular comment anywhere, certainly aroused no suspicion. If he held any such shocking sentiment as that it was not always a man's duty to wait passively for death, his acquaintance did not know it; but after supper, among a company of his neighbors congregated as usual in the gossipy post-office (the most genial of the town's after-supper resorts, combining with its other uses clocks and jewelry on sale and under repairs), there seemed to be an unaccountable feeling that Mr. Dayne was this time "going off."

One of the less skeptical concerning his recovery declared: "You can't reckon certainly on consumption, further'n that it's sure to kill a man sometime; but when?" and the speaker quoted the dumb doctor as having actually said that Mr. Dayne might live years — no one could tell.

Hereupon a man who, with his wife, had just left the

sick-house came to the defence of *his* side of the argument—the hopeless side—with the irrefutable assertion, “Them bleedin’ spells has got to have a last time.”

Mr. Small here, under his breath, inquired of his dog, which was inserting its cubic nose into other people’s business, “Will you dezist?”

One of the assembly, to whom, judging from the frequency of his ejaculation “I’ll be hanged!” the gallows presented no objectionable features, said, “I’ll be hanged if I ain’t sorry anything’s been said to the family about help. Prob’ly now it won’t be needed, and their feelin’s might ‘a’ been spared.”

Mr. Small concurred, saying, though probably without intending a pun on Mr. Dayne’s condition, “Yes, it’s ben a fatle mistake,” and remarked parenthetically, as though there was no hope of being believed and so he would keep it to himself, “That dog actshally wirled this morning, and went back to the house, wen my wife rapped on the window and beckoned to him.”

The despondent man then backed his theory of a last time, and that this was it, with that clearness and force of argument often observable in human speech:

“My wife’s got uncommon judgment,—never did I know her equal!—and if she’d seen Dayne she could ‘a’ told you whether he’d ever git round agin; but she saw the doctor. He come into the kitchen about something on the stove, and never spoke a word. She made up her mind then that Dayne couldn’t stand it.”

Whether the great wisdom with which the dumb doctor was credited, and which, it seems, he suffered not to escape through the natural outlet of his mouth, found expression through his atmosphere cannot be declared. This, however, is a view agreeably adapted to explain the fact that the last speaker’s penetrating wife had, upon merely observing the physician pursuing the usual

speechless tenor of his way, concluded that Mr. Dayne couldn't stand it; and especially as, had it been his pleasure, the dumb doctor could doubtless have truthfully remarked as he stood by the fire, "I'm pretty well convinced that, do what I may, this man will never be any better." At all events he soon after rose from his chair by the bedside, with the air of one whose task is ended, and saying to Mrs. Dayne, "You ought to have your mother and Hugh with you to-night," engaged himself in looking for his soft hat, which he had left in the entry on a little polished table made by the master of the house.

"Then it's of no use for *you* to stay any longer?" Mrs. Dayne asked.

The person interrogated gazed over, sidewise, at the chair he had just vacated, as though he thought that by a sufficiently prolonged scrutiny of its seat he should discover his missing head-covering flattened thereon, and answered, "Of no use to *him* — no."

This, as may readily be divined, was no surprise to the questioner. She presently went to the window and looked out.

"It's dark for Leo to walk two miles to mother's. Perhaps I can get—"

"I shall be passing there shortly. I must go home for Bobby."

It sounded as if he said Bobby. This was the doctor's horse—a handsome beast though of singular appearance, looking always as horses do in Winter when their backward-blown breath has frozen lightly on their sides.

Bobby was believed to be the only object of the dumb doctor's affection, inasmuch as, in spite of the popular opinion that a man so well able really ought to marry,—and also in spite of the various means employed by sympathetic single women, who thought it must be very

lonely for him with only an old hired housekeeper for company, to let him know that he need not despair,—he had remained a bachelor, and, so far as argus-eyed watchers could discern, without even a fancy since he came into the town years ago, a young man.

“I’ll call and send them down,” he added as he went out, recollecting at last where his hat was.

Within a half-hour he drove into the yard of the old farmhouse where lived Emeline Dayne’s mother and youngest brother, and where she and a goodly number of other children had been born and reared, and whence all of them but Hugh had gone forth to that “Mecca of hearts,” a home of one’s own.

It was very dark. Many shadowy outbuildings, drear and lonely,—quite a village of them,—among rank shrubs and bushes and reached by moist paths, were dimly perceptible in the rear. Old trees, black, gnarled, and twisted, covered one end of the low dwelling, and crowded so hard against it that they might have sprung from its rotting sills.

The dumb doctor alighted, but did not immediately seek entrance. He looked about—if one in darkness can be said to look about. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he felt rather than saw, as he stood, his back to Bobby, in front of the silent abode, whence no light issued save from a remote window in the L.

The doctor stood. Then, like one in whom reverence increases, he slowly took off his recovered hat, and, holding it in his hand, ruthlessly crushed it by folding his arms over his rugged chest. Still he stood.

The clumps of venerable lilacs arching the way to the unused and moldy front door—as desolate as if it had never opened—would furnish a black hiding-place for one who wished to note the incongruous intruder’s strange behavior; incongruous, because hale and hearty



and of this generation, while what was around him was sagging, crumbling, and of the past, representing the labor of many dead ancestors of Emeline Dayne. A low wind, in passing, made dirge for the scattered leaves it was sweeping to their graves.

The doctor scanned the now lowering sky, and peered up the street to the next house, where a very bright light shone, evidently set for somebody outside. In the distance, on the road below, a heavy team was laboriously approaching, to the accompaniment of the driver's occasional admonitions.

Bobby's harness creaked. The doctor, looking round, found his horse's face close to his.

"Baby,"—it sounded now like Baby,—“you don't know,” he said softly. Then, in fragments, “Do you, Baby? — I never told you, did I? — You want to know what 'tis? — No, no!”

Here a ray shot round the end of the L, a latch rattled, footsteps were heard, and a voice saying, “Come on, Colonel! We've got the barn chores to do yet.”

Then there advanced along the path what showed, in the flickering of the swinging lantern, as a manly pair of legs, preceded by a very small and unwarlike dog, whose military name had probably been given to him in derision. He was an animal bent upon living peaceably with all men as much as lay in him, and he religiously refrained from conveying to his master any hint of the presence of a possible enemy at hand.

Owing to the apostolic principles of this diminutive creature, the doctor was able to get his demoralized hat on to his somewhat confused head before Hugh Sanford came, with an exclamation of surprise, upon an empty carriage in his yard — a little open vehicle, low-set, with a square, boxed-up aspect, and seeming so much smaller than the man who rode in it that, when he was occupying

it, the wonder was how he ever wedged himself in, and a greater how he was ever to draw himself out.

Holding up the lantern, Hugh discovered the doctor, who said, with unusual jocoseness, probably employed to conceal possible traces of his recent agitation,—

“Halloo, Hugh! Don’t be alarmed! It’s as dark as pitch; but now you can pilot me. I s’pose you haven’t heard that Mr. Dayne is worse.”

“No!”

“You and your mother had better ride down and stay over night. If there’s nothing to hinder, it would be well enough to harness up now; and I’ll go in and tell your mother.”

“He ain’t dying, is he?” inquired the young man, searching the herald’s countenance, on which the light shone fitfully. “It must be something more than common, or you wouldn’t have come—with all that you have to attend to,” he added deferentially; for the dumb doctor’s fame had long ago spread far, and he had a correspondingly large practice.

“He is lower now than he ever has been. To tell the truth, I don’t think he can last till morning; and your sister don’t want the neighbors with her—of course.”

“It’ll give mother a start, though we’ve been expecting it a good while. I was going down to-morrow anyway, to take her. She thought o’ staying a couple o’ days. Well, this’ll give her a start,” he repeated; “and I guess, doctor, if you don’t care, I’d better tell her myself. *She fails.*”

“To be expected, at her age,” murmured the doctor.

“Her mind’s growing hard o’ hearing, as well as her ears; but still Emeline’s troubles take hold o’ mother, and if she saw you coming in—”

“You’re right,” broke in the doctor, getting into his box, while Hugh again held up the unsteady lantern,

thus revealing his own comely features, which not even old age, grudging youth, could say belonged to a man over five-and-twenty. So this decaying habitation had young life and fresh hopes in it; and, besides, Hugh would before long bring to it, from a neighboring farmer's, a sparkling little bride.

The doctor dismissed the young man with—"My horse can turn in the dark," and as Hugh and his protective dog disappeared round the corner, Baby too wheeled about, and was soon as comfortable in his stable as the doctor in his study — perhaps more so.

Whether the man really had the hinted errand beyond Mrs. Dayne's early home and had neglected that errand, or whether he took the ride on purpose to perform the kindly office, must be conjectured; for the only one who knows is the dumb doctor.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE WAY OF GOD.

UNLIKE many deaths, Mr. Dayne's honored medical wisdom enough to occur when that wisdom prophesied it would, and was followed, as a matter of course, by his burial.

Not even now that he was dead could his most enthusiastic friends have claimed that he was faultless. Long knowledge of him (for he came here from distant parts, to work, when but a youth) had left no doubt in the common mind about the pitch of his spirit—it was indubitably “high.” Was he not passionately desirous of having things about him “in shape,” and always doing something to make them so? Then, he was “quick” to wax indignant—everybody knew that; though he was as “quick” to admit with strong heartiness his error when convinced of it. And you could always reason with him.

His phenomenal faculty of preserving the cleanliness of white shirts while his shopmates looked dirty enough in colored ones, and his wholly abnormal practice of wiping his feet before entering any dwelling of the children of men, probably embittered the home life of some less careful heads of families; but, in spite of these obstacles in the way of obtaining the highest approbation of the masculine public, Mr. Dayne's counterbalancing virtues of constant laboriousness, debt-paying integrity,

and painfully conscientious, some said foolish, keeping of promises and engagements though it were to his own hindrance,—these excellences had availed to make him, however some may deprecate the expression, “universally respected.”

If he held any other uncanonical — irreligious — views, to accompany his possible opinion that self-destruction was sometimes justifiable, the fact had never been discovered.

Even his wife respected him; yes, in her heart of hearts, and after more than twenty years under the same roof. Not always does it happen that a character so long subjected to the microscopic inspection of another commands the slowly grown tribute of that other's genuine esteem. It would be an interesting inquiry what arithmetical proportion exists between this sort of offering and the number of irreproachably wired mortuary pinks.

But Mr. Dayne was now — or at least such belief is an eminently supported and pious one — indifferent alike to mundane encomium and censure; for it was already a week since, on a day that “felt like Sunday,” as Mrs. Thompson remarked, because of the deepened quiet and the gathered people, that the grassy old burying-ground, with its gleaming white headstones among black, sunken, and leaning ones, was made to present a livelier appearance than for some time before, by the admission of his funeral cortege. There were not only his mourners proper, in carriages,—Mrs. Dayne's married brothers and sisters, with their families, making an imposing number of these,—but others, on foot, taking the opportunity to visit the graves of their kin or the graveyard at large. A little out of the village, on the side-hill, lay the reposeful spot.

Mr. Dayne's wife and daughter — though this, too,

should be a matter of no interest to a rightly constituted shade—were already about to go out from the goodly house which his hands had built, and join the two sons of his loins, who were prevented from attending their father's funeral by reason, as was understood, of a delay in the transportation of the message; for the expected information from Mr. Brackett, and, since then, other private communications from him, had duly arrived in the very lank mail-bag.

Yet if, before Mr. Dayne died, some exigency had called one of his neighbors out of town, and that neighbor had been just now returning past the bereaved house, he would have thought, in his ignorance of what had transpired, that Mr. Dayne was having another ill-turn.

Dr. White's carriage stood at the door, and trouble from a possible prospective determination to seek change on the part of Bobby, or Baby, had been provided against by the use of a vile halter wherewith that untrustworthy pet was now ignominiously attached to the white picket-fence.

By the way, the doctor would not tell whether his horse's name was Bobby or Baby; for, finding many puzzled on the point, he had a good-natured enjoyment of their perplexity, and did not care to enlighten them.

Mrs. Dayne's desire to go to her sons as soon as possible was generally appreciated, and excused what might otherwise have been regarded as unseemly haste. No one but herself and Leo knew how hotly impatient that desire was, for no one but them knew what were the contents of Mr. Brackett's letters—all received too late to trouble the master of the house.

Mrs. Dayne gives the impression that the boys have only been neglectful about writing—they never did like it; and they are among strangers, she says, and at the

age when they most need a home. Besides, she must send Leo to school now.

The adjustment of her small affairs has obliged the widow to see not a few persons in the last six days. Shortly she will be gone, leaving her household goods ready to be sent by her agent, Mr. Small.

That Dr. White should call is a matter of course. Mr. Small has been a persistent visitor, made so by his effort to carry out a long-cherished purpose of his, revealed even to Mrs. Small only in the confidences incident to a sharing of the same coverlid, and incompatible, save in the light of "business," with his indifferent opinion of the Dayne house "anyway," as expressed whenever he heard its merits under discussion.

He had lost no time after the burial in presenting his forehead for Mrs. Dayne's contemplation, and in laying before her a very reasonable offer for the little estate, of which, when in the postoffice of an evening, he thought but poorly; for Mr. Small's financiering tact, which he considered too deep and uncommon to be fathomable by the ordinary mind, did not so much contemplate buying the property for less than it was worth as it did preventing that eager competition and "speckelation" that do not conduce to the sober valuations upon which depends the ability of "solid" men to remain such.

All his zeal, however, has resulted in nothing more satisfactory than his being instructed to rent the place for the time being. Mrs. Dayne cannot give up her old home until she has made a new one.

Dr. White is supposed to have pecuniary interests there—for who is to know that, so far as his "bill" is concerned, he has requested to deal entirely with the agent, Mr. Small, hereafter? Yes, he has evidently come on business, quickly over. Already he is coming out. Mrs. Dayne has followed him, and stands just

within, he outside. She leans against the edge of the open door, abstractedly turning the knob back and forth.

By looking across the entry into the room they have just vacated, we may see Leo finishing the last of the buttonholes. The interview took place in her presence, as now the few veiled words are spoken in her hearing :

"I may not write?"

"No."

"Ever?"

"No—it's too late."

"I have always pleased myself with thinking that it is never too late to do a right."

"What was a right once can be a wrong afterwards. There is such a thing," she added slowly, and as if she were looking inward and reading a record from her heart, "I've learned it, I know it,—there is such a thing as too late—for this world."

"Not for another?"

"God forbid!"

"It won't be long! I'm getting gray," and the doctor touched his blond hair, which might be observed to be indeed whitening. "It won't be long," he repeated.

"No, not long—for any of us; *but here there is no consolation but to continue in the strait and narrow way of God to the end,*" answered Mrs. Dayne faintly, from behind the closing door.

Why is it that some things not more important than others cling so much more tenaciously in the memory? Years after, Leo could have repeated exactly those words of her mother, "Here there is no consolation but to continue in the strait and narrow way of God to the end."



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE WORLD AS YOU FIND IT.

"Yes, mam, he'll soon be here now. He's never later than ten minutes past"—and the man pointed at the clock with the feathery end of his dust-brush.

It was nine in the morning, and for an hour Mrs. Dayne and her daughter had been waiting in Mr. Brackett's office in Trenburg. He had asked that they come directly there, to enable him to explain to their mother the "little difficulty"—nothing, his epistles had assured her, but what he could and would manage—in which her sons were involved.

At the time she presented herself, the man with a dust-brush was clearing yesterday's coals, covered with a stratum of orange-peel and nut-shells, from the grate, and building a new fire. The air was sharp, as became it on one of the first days of November, and the room would have looked cold enough without any help from the palmleaf fan that was lying on the table.

As to Leo, the susceptible young novice, most that she had seen since the night before had been fresh, strange, exciting. The stage had brought her to Hilchester station, over the fifteen miles that lay between her home and it. With a shiver of awe and a sudden rising of tears, induced by a novel and overwhelming sense of the majesty of things, she had watched the on-coming locomotive, with its moveless cyclops eye and something awful in its beneficent strength; and since then almost everything had been marvelous.

She was living her old life till that flaming chariot came and snatched her out of it; a chariot, she thought, almost like something in the Bible—the prophet's vision of “living creatures” that “ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning,” the likeness of the firmament upon whose head was “as the color of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above,” and the noise of whose wings was “like the noise of great waters.”

Then, indeed, had begun for her a new existence. It was as though she had stepped from one sphere into another. Her feelings were in a wild whirl. She sat for a long time very still, not disturbing her mother with a word, nor daring to turn her head much to look about.

Mrs. Dayne, next the aisle, and resting her head on her hand, seemed to be either sleepy or dejected, or both. Or was she mourning—regretting?

Leo was not yet acquainted with the manners of the order of beings she had joined, but had a vague belief that the people who frequent railroad trains are dwellers in cities, and of superior deportment and gentility. Hence she behaved bashfully and constrainedly, now regarding her apparel with deprecatory distrust, as she had not when at home; and, in fact, her garments were not calculated to arouse much admiration in the æsthetic. The identical dress in which we first saw her had been freshly washed and ironed for this trip, her mother having said that any better one would be too good for traveling. A new shawl, large, thick, gray, and exquisitely suitable for an afflicted elderly lady to wear as an emblem of inconsolable grief, enveloped her gaunt figure, the fringed apex of this inverted triangular weed falling below her skirts behind, and charged with such pathos as inheres in the tail of “a rained-on fowl.” Her head supported a hat, also provided for this occasion.

Mrs. Thompson, who often referred to the time when she was a milliner, insisted upon manufacturing Leo's needed bonnet without money and without price. In her zeal she assured the mother that it could be made without buying anything, the desirableness of performing such a feat being what it were blasphemy in the eyes of a woman of correct principles, like Mrs. Thompson, to question.

Mrs. Dayne, whose packing operations brought to light a good many odds and ends, contributed a heterogeneous assortment of crumpled ribbons and dispirited flowers, and an ancestral hood of silk.

Out of these materials, with the addition of a cast-off straw of Mr. Thompson's, now made to serve as a frame, its original nature to be obscured by a covering of the silk and by deceptive rosettes and nosegays, the well-meaning but misguided neighbor fashioned the headgear which Leo was to wear to the city.

It would ill become us, who know Mrs. Thompson's real kindness of heart, to ridicule the work of her fingers, less nimble now than in that remote period before love's blandishments induced her to forsake her tasteful calling. The probability did not present itself to her that her husband's sizable if not notable head was of a different girth from the youthful one over the way; for when the girl put the disguised article on it sank down all around to the level of her brows, and not even by setting it jauntily on one side could it be long prevented from slipping into this position.

When Leo, who never had been expected to be exacting and consequently was not, drew her mother's attention to this highly ornamented object's only fault,—too great amplitude,—she received the careless reply, given with scarcely a glance at the monstrosity referred to, "Oh, I guess it'll answer," Mrs. Dayne's indifference to good taste in her daughter's attire being always profound.

So there Leo sat, under the shadow of the overspreading brim, her thick hair, not quite lost to view behind, wasted in a coiling, intestinal arrangement, from ear to ear, of braids so tight that merely to look at them was painful, unless one were relieved by the idea that the whole close-fitting device was an ingenious benefaction of the wig-maker for hiding complete baldness. An anomalous figure truly: large as some women, but with the face of childhood; lean and meager as though wasted by sickness, but with the mien of health; her clothing showing such insensibility to all toilet virtues except cleanliness that the fact of her being accompanied by a person with nothing eccentric about her to indicate relationship would perhaps make the observer wonder if the lady were traveling home with some orphan child whom she had picked up.

But whatever thoughts Leo and her mother may have awakened in any looker-on inclined to dream dreams, the dim, upholstered car, which, if all go well, will to-morrow morning be in one of the chief cities of another State, was the while stolidly bearing them all forward.

Leo, we know, does not venture to look around much; but she has occupation enough without that. She is full of excitement. She feels refinedly the ecstatic thrill communicated by the leaping stream of life which has swept round her, and is carrying her, on its rocking bosom, to other scenes. Nothing she beholds is ordinary to her, or mercenary, or matter-of-course. All seems luminous, dignified, impressive. The world is so large, so full, so rich! Scraps of poetry which she had learned to "speak" at school during her short experience there repeated themselves over and over to her. Beating on through the dark toward the wonderful city, and filled with a tumult of half-defined but exalted cravings, she longed to do — be — herself something good, great.

"I will! I will!"—so ran her tingling thoughts. "I can if I only try hard enough!"

She pictured the school to which she was to be sent.

"I will be a scholar, and make mother, and the boys, and everybody proud! Of course the others will know a great deal more, but I will overtake them. Oh, dear! If only father wasn't dead! I would have made him proud, too! He would have been more so than anybody. But I will be an honor to him, at any rate!"

She fidgeted a little under the weighty shawl, she was in such haste to begin.

In spite of buttonholes, Leo was a reader; and, besides, her education had not been so grossly neglected that she had never been told of a lad who, going to the town with his earthly all in a handkerchief, had become very powerful, or famous, or noble. This boy, of course with his bundle on a stick over his shoulder, now performed before her stimulated imagination, pleasing her as well as did Herodias' daughter Herod of Jewry.

"Where there's a will there's a way"—Leo had always heard that; and certainly the fervent and passionate will to become or to accomplish something worthy or fine was not lacking to her in this moment of exultation at finding herself a member of the mighty world—this moment of pride in its achievements, of strong defiance of fate, of rapturous consciousness of on-coming opportunity. Delicious views of the future crowded before her; ardent resolves to quit herself well in this wondrous world were registered in her heart. Now that she had burst bondage and was astir, no smooth wall between her and beautiful, beckoning Possibility appeared unscalable. It was as though her life had all along run darkly, like a winter stream under its roof of ice, among bare trees, through snowy and untraveled flats, and just now had reached a belt of tropic Summer stretched across it, where gaudy birds sang in the scented sunshine, where

heavy vines swung in knotted embrace in the throbbing air, where gauzy-winged insects dallied away in voluptuousness the unregretted hours,—so gorgeous were her loosened fancies induced by her sudden entrance into this rare atmosphere.

But at length all the wild, weird dance of her thoughts began to end. Slower and slower moved the flagging figures. Soon she succumbed altogether, laying her hat, with a supposititious head under it, against the side of the carriage, there to rest in sleep.

When, toward morning, she awoke, she busied herself trying to make out the flitting, phantom objects to be seen from the car window. How soon she would be in the city! And, alas! how ashen and miserable, in the cheerless morning, looked the burnt-out fire of last night's bright aspirations and determinations! How lame her neck, how cold her feet, how stiff her limbs!

Now, too, she wondered more than she had before what the little difficulty about her brothers could be, and what they would say first, and if she should really be with them this very day. Without good cause, her spirits sank lower and lower. In fact, she felt like crying. Had her mother noticed this, and asked, "What's the matter?" nothing could have saved her from breaking down; but Mrs. Dayne, observing that her daughter had been occupied since light with looking out, and being herself fatigued, had not spoken many times.

Leo did not wish her mother to see her in tears. Many a time she had vowed never again to give way to them in that presence. Generally when she had done so, her mother, inquiring into the cause, had considered it, though eagerly set forth by Leo as very grievous, to be of no consequence whatever, and, with the intention of administering the most effective soother of so foolish a pain, had indulged in rallying laughter and poohs. Then, when Leo unaccountably continued sorrowful, she

would regard her with genuine perplexity, and at length turn away, saying, with a manner that betokened a giving-up of the whole puzzle how a young person could lament so about nothing,—“Well, I don’t know!”

Leo had intended to look about her and see all she could so soon as she should arrive in the city, with its paved streets, its buildings fabulously high, its policemen pacing about in broad daylight, its houses with numbers and names on their doors; but when these prodigies, described in her marveling ears from her youth up, were verily in view, she had no eyes save such as filled and blurred with sadness.

Besides, so many people turned to stare at her that she had looked mostly on the ground, and so had taken her first walk in a city without noticing very much.

Now here they were in Mr. Brackett’s office. They could watch the sun creep forward on some slate roofs opposite, melting the rime as its line advanced; or observe Mr. Brackett’s ivy,—tied to its support with a blue ribbon,—as though to discover from his belongings what sort of man he was; or listen to his canary bird, and wonder if it were not cold at night; or try to follow the course of some one of the motes which the man with a dust-brush persisted in circulating, having conscientiously flourished that instrument of cleanliness a number of times over every piece of furniture, the corner safe, the cardrack on the wall, the framed picture of some machine works, the brilliant calendar. The coals were hot now, and looked lazy and crimson in the brightness.

The indications of activity in the building had increased. People had come up and gone down over the stairs, keys had been turned in locks, steps had echoed away through remote entries overhead. A moment ago a gentleman with a rosy face, evidently fresh from a morning bath, had put his head into the room and inquired, “Hasn’t Charlie come yet?” On being an-

swered in the negative by the man with a dust-brush, he said, "Tell him I'll be in again," and withdrew.

Leo's face and eyes were ablaze. A nervous dread in expectation of Mr. Brackett's coming had taken possession of her. She listened with thick-beating heart, and said to herself "Here he is!" whenever any passer-by in the corridor outside threw a shadow on the lettered glass of the door. If she and her mother had had any disposition to converse, the presence of the serving-man would have prevented them.

Suddenly a figure came close up to the door, paused an instant, then entered. The visitors both rose. Mr. Brackett not having been informed what day Mrs. Dayne would arrive, and not recognizing her, glanced coldly at the unusual spectacle of females within precincts sacred to wholesale transactions in iron, then came forward with, if not a brusque, certainly a very business-like air.

"Well, what can I do for you?"

Mrs. Dayne stood quietly smiling.

"Well, I declare!" he exclaimed, putting out his hand, his manner undergoing a pleasant change. "I didn't know you! And this is your daughter?" shaking hands with Leo. "I declare," repeated Mr. Brackett, whose short and thick body and convex breast and exceedingly substantial feet—in polished boots—gave him an assertive look corresponding with his declaratory tongue, "I declare," stepping back a little to survey Leo the better, and fitting his back comfortably against his high desk, "she's 'most as tall as you—almost got her growth. She's like her father, I suppose?"

If he had thought, Mr. Brackett would not have come so near to alluding to the recent bereavement.

"Yes, she is like her father," Mrs. Dayne said; "and as to disposition, she is her father. The two are positively one there. I am not represented in her," she added.



Then followed questions from Mr. Brackett about people he had known; for since his aged father's death he had not retained any connection with his native town. He interspersed his conversation with much laughter, especially when he recalled some youthful peccadillo or mentioned some circumstance which appeared to him very ludicrous.

In fact, for the first few minutes, whether from design or not, he gave Mrs. Dayne no opportunity to broach the matter which had engaged them in the late correspondence. Finally his reservoir of inquiries seemed to become exhausted. He "declared" it was like talking with them to have heard thus from old acquaintances. Then came an awkward pause, which he hastened to fill by crying, "I declare I never thought of it! Won't you go out and have a cup of coffee and something to eat? My house is too far away."

Mrs. Dayne said she had no appetite and knew that Leo had not yet taken any of the luncheon she brought. Then twice she opened her mouth to speak and shut it again. When she did succeed, she appeared to be under the impression that her previous efforts had not been futile, and that she had been refused an answer.

"Do tell me what trouble my boys were in! What was it? I've relied on what you said—that it wasn't of much consequence." This last sounded rather pitiful and doubting.

"Oh, that!" as though it had just occurred to him. In writing he had not thought how hard it would be to tell the facts when he came to be face to face with her. "We've got to take the world as we find it," he continued impressively. "Now all boys sow wild oats." Here he fitted himself again to his desk, put his elbows back on the edge, and, with his head on one side, looked as if challenging Mrs. Dayne or any other woman to say anything in opposition to statements so incontrovertible.

"Yes," she assented, somewhat feebly, and trying to smile in response to his smile, thus making her expression an odd and not agreeable mixture to look upon.

Observing this, Mr. Brackett strengthened the axioms previously enunciated: "Yes. Now I sowed my wild oats," and he laughed as though the remembrance of his own early moral agriculture were far from afflictive, and as though he were struck anew with the irresistible comicality to the mature mind of this provision of Nature for the relief of boys.

Mrs. Dayne, however, sat bolt upright, staring straight at him. Instead of being reassured by his lightness, she was alarmed. Being, in certain cases, a singularly, not to say stupidly, unsuspecting person, she divined now for the first time that the little difficulty was worse than she had thought. It had made her anxious before: now her attitude was that of one who expects a blow. Her face was blanched, and palpitated as though with the motions of a bloodless heart beneath.

Leo, quicker than her mother to feel the shadow of on-coming evil, was half stunned, and anticipated nothing short of murder.

Mr. Brackett, visibly sobering, looked critically at Mrs. Dayne, as if estimating her ability to bear up. In this pose the three (the man of the brush had disappeared on his master's entrance) remained for a moment. Then Mr. Brackett drew a chair and sat down, saying, with a slight attempt at his former facetiousness,—

"It's all right now, you know; sure to be. Set that down first. The truth is, it was a scrape—quite a scrape; but don't be dismayed. What I wrote is correct enough—that they're certain to come out right. In fact, the danger is mostly over now, and—"

He stopped and regarded Mrs. Dayne with a waiting look. She, however, put no question, but sat studying her informant as before.

"Of course you want to know the particulars. Well, they got into trouble—as I say. In fact, it was—at first, you understand—rather serious, I declare. They didn't go home to their father's funeral. The older one could, but not the other; and it looked better for both to stay in sight. I advised it. If the older one had gone, he might have been suspected of slipping his bail."

"Bail!"

"In fact, they were (it's law, you know—a form of law) in—confinement. It was a case of blackmailing. The younger one wrote a letter. He says he didn't know what 'twas all about, and wrote it to oblige, at the dictation of a fellow that asked him—a miserable scamp with a bad name, I'll admit. The fellow can't be found now. Your son says the man pretended he couldn't write, and needed the letter written. I can't say what the facts of the case are, for boys will be boys."

"That is no excuse," said Mrs. Dayne hoarsely.

"Well, the corner of Brackton where they are is rather a tough hole anyway, if it is called Utopia; and, at all events, they were arrested. On suspicion—or somehow. But what I say is, I'll see them through. I feel some responsibility for them. Besides, I've been a boy myself; and if they did go a little wrong, I'll do them the justice to say that I don't think there's any real harm in them. Probably they did it for fun."

Mr. Brackett was administering to the mother all the consolation he honestly could. To his mind, it was natural enough that boys, finding themselves entangled, should invent some plausible story or other to clear themselves. He would have done the same. So he did not blame these—nor believe them; indeed, did not trouble himself to follow intelligently their explanation. He was too busy taking this world as he found it. Hence he could not give a rational account of the affair.

For her part, it seemed to Mrs. Dayne that in that

hour when she tried to wake her husband and could not, an era of horrors dawned upon her. Had her sons now turned alien, and, despising the precepts wherein they had been reared, begun to tread the thorny path of transgression?

"I shouldn't have said so much," continued Mr. Brackett, "but you would have to know, and 'twas better I should tell you than for you to hear it first from strangers. That might have been the case if you had gone out to Utopia; and I suppose you will go out?"

"Yes."

"Well, I want you to remember that there's nothing to fear now — nothing at all; but as you're going out, I must let you know beforehand that the younger one is — hasn't been released yet, and can't be just at present. I got Hooper to bail the other; but I won't stand about bail for this one — I'm working for something better. I'll manage everything. Of course it takes time — these things do; but I have influence. A good many of the judicial fraternity are personal friends of mine. You know what that signifies," screwing up one side of his face meaningly. "I tell you favor can do anything, in this world. You'll find the older one at work and expecting you any day — Hooper took him back, of course."

"Is that the owner?"

"Yes, Hooper — friend of mine. Now I told you to just rest easy — everything was right; and so it is: and to send your letters for them to me, and they'd get them; and so they have, and consequently they know of the — the affliction they've met with at home. They would have written themselves, since things got easier, if you hadn't been coming so soon. They both have good courage, and always urged me not to let you and their father know; and, really, it was out of the question for me to lay the whole before you sooner. No good could have come of it?" half interrogatively, for Mr. Brackett

had a disagreeable suspicion that Mrs. Dayne did not quite exonerate him.

"No," said she mechanically. "How can I get to them?" drawing up her shawl.

Mr. Brackett penciled something on the blank side of one of his cards.

"There! This tells you how to find the older one, and you'll get the rest from him."

He should have said the larger one, whom he naturally took to be the older. The fact was that the inferior in size was the senior in years. Yes, the fact was that little Luke, the first of Mrs. Dayne's children, though not exactly a dwarf in mind or body, had never been "quite strong" in either, and never could be; but Seth, only a year younger, had always acted as Luke's bulwark and reinforcement.

"Thank you," said the mother, taking the card.

"Now one thing more: after you've seen them, I want you to come back here, and go to my house and make it your home till you've decided what to do. My wife'll be glad to have you."

"Thank you. You are —" But she could not go on.

"And remember," repeated Mr. Brackett, following into the passage, "there's nothing to worry about now. In fact, we're in hopes it'll never come to trial. That's the thing I'm aiming at. There's no doubt but I can manage it."

"The guilty ought to suffer," said Mrs. Dayne, as if she were repeating to herself an ancient article of her belief,—forced upon her mind in this juncture,—to see how it would apply.

"Oh, pshaw!" with the slightest possible degree of impatience. "I tell you it don't do to be too particular in this world. You've got to take it as you find it, and govern yourself accordingly; or else it'll take *you*."

"Yes," answered his visitor chokingly.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE WORKROOMS.

BEFORE noon Mrs. Dayne reached the near town where, so short a time before, her sons had taken up their abode—a town as different as possible from the one whence they came, except in having a dam with foamy water pouring over it, very much like the one at home by the grist and saw mills. Here the water could not, apparently, have been put to better use than in washing Utopia, of which nothing but its sky above seemed to be clean. Of what Mrs. Dayne said and did and saw in going there she remembered little. The journey was accomplished as in a dream.

At length, however, she found herself asking for Seth at the counting-house of the works of Mr. Brackett's friend. With her, of course, was Leo, who, though in a kind of wooden stupor induced in part by Mr. Brackett's horrible disclosures, and in part by the bewildering experiences of the whole twenty-four hours past, was still alive enough to try to comfort herself by thinking that there was the same God here, in all this strangeness and loneliness, that there was at home; even as one entering a far land, and surrounded by barbarous faces and amazed by singular customs, is supported in his homesickness by the thought that his familiar friend is dwelling in the midst of these things. All other feeling was lost in a dull sense of darkness and desolation, of being abroad

and drifting, wretched and half dead, from no place to no place. When great calamity befalls us we forget for the time all the concerns which yesterday seemed so momentous, and concentrate our desires upon some small matter. Perhaps to get home, or some such thing, is all we want then.

The counting-house was a broad room, where, behind a railing, stood several glistening machines or parts of machines. Outside of this enclosure, on a high stool, behind a desk that looked like a cage because provided with a wire top, perched a smart youth, with eyeglasses, working over some books. "Fast" is the expressive though objectionable word which would fitly describe this person. At hand lay a cluster of bananas. Behind him appeared a back view of another clerk similarly elevated and engaged, and who did not turn round.

In answer to Mrs. Dayne's question, "Is Seth Dayne here?" he said, after impudently surveying her from top to toe and waiting so long that she was about to repeat the inquiry, "Yes, there's such a person here." Taking off his glasses and leisurely breathing upon them, he wrapped a finger in an odoriferous handkerchief and began rubbing them.

Looking upward through an aperture at a face is not favorable to the formation of just views of its comeliness. It must be a faultless mouth and nose that can, under these circumstances, excite admiration; and certainly a man called to an occupation inseparable from a continuous ordeal of this kind ought to be possessed of such a measure of real goodness of heart as is understood to transform plain features. As the stripling bookkeeper at Hooper's sat scrupulously polishing the lenses, and, without saying anything, diffusing a kind of insulting frigidness easily felt, especially by one in Mrs. Dayne's position of powerlessness, dependence, and suspense, he

certainly did not impress his beholders as wearing that illumination of countenance upon which is founded the saying, "Handsome is that handsome does."

"Can I see him?" resumed Mrs. Dayne.

The bookkeeper put on the glasses. "Can't you read?" he said, pointing to a placard which she had not observed. "If you can, you'll save yourself and me considerable time and trouble."

"Oh, yes! I didn't see," she said apologetically, but immediately repented of her humility.

"It was put there to be seen," muttered the bookkeeper, locking together a pair of white hands and resting them on the ledger before him.

It was the ordinary notice: "Visitors not admitted to the workrooms except on business, nor without a permit from the desk."

"I don't understand that that debars me from seeing my son," said Mrs. Dayne, going back, and bristling with a sudden return of her ability to defend herself. "I have business, and I suppose you are here to furnish permits. I will take one. I thought Mr. Brackett wouldn't have sent me here on a fool's errand."

"Oh!" said the bookkeeper, with undisturbed equanimity. "Why didn't you mention Mr. Brackett's name at once? We know him. That would have made it all right."

"I'm not asking a favor in Mr. Brackett's name, I'm demanding common decency in my own," was the sharp reply.

"All correct," was the answer, in a voice much muffled in satisfaction with tropical products, the bookkeeper having taken up a banana, stripped it, and begun eating.

This was Mr. Hooper's adopted son, in whom that otherwise childless man could with difficulty perceive



any defects, and whom he was preparing to succeed him.

The black-winged incubus which had shadowed Mrs. Dayne since that hour when her era of horrors commenced had at last evidently taken flight. Her force — and nobody who knew her pretended to deny that she had it — was asserting itself again.

She always had the name, at home, of being a little too forcible — forcible enough to be prickly, and to lead poor Mr. Dayne rather a crushed life. Mrs. Thompson, or anybody about there, could have told you that she was too difficult to “get along” even with herself, and that all she wanted was to be opposed — to have some one to contend with; “but then everybody, you know, has failings, and we all understand how to take Emeline Dayne.”

“Now I’ll fight,” thought that person, as she walked away with the slip which the bookkeeper had handed. “There was force in me once, and there’s force in me now; and I’ll beat, too. I’ll save the boys.”

As Leo followed her mother through the rear door marked “To the Workrooms,” she happened to glance back, and discovered the bookkeeper laughing at her and nudging the accountant behind him, who looked round, but, when he saw for what his attention had been called, turned back to his work with an expression of displeasure at his companion’s rudeness. She closed the door and went on.

Through the steam-warmed passageway came sounds of whirring belts and trembling machinery. Its windows looked out on the thrifty litter of the yard, including a bed of mortar and other signs of increase of business and enlargement of borders. Its termination was another office.

Here also there were two men. There was, besides,

an errand-boy, who occupied a screw-chair, and whose pleasing duty when not otherwise engaged appeared to be to revolve in it like the earth on its axis. One of the adults was a mason and builder in consultation with the other, whom he called Mr. Hooper.

The mason and builder was a huge man, convinced that the world was not made in a minute, and conducted himself like a majestic ship. Mr. Hooper was a wee man, clean, anxious, shaven, and bent, and conducted himself like a puffing steam-tug. His eyes, which were near together, were also crossed, probably with piercing so keenly into everything about the works of the New England Machine Company—for such were the words on the outside sign designating the long, low structure.

He flew round as though he were the wheel that drove all, and had a realizing sense that if he should stop, everything would come to a standstill. There was not a particle of hostility in his manner, not a particle of pomposity, not a particle of insolence.

As he talked and culled papers, he frequently turned to Mrs. Dayne, nodding, as much as to say, "I see you!" "Presently!" "Wait just a second!" "I'll be there!" meantime keeping up a gentle stepping, as though the factory were run in part by foot-power and he were at the treadles.

When the mason and builder withdrew, and Mr. Hooper, with accelerated speed expressive of apology for wasting anybody's precious time, spun over to her, asking with genial haste what she would like, and conveying a somewhat alarming notion that he would perform any request in no time and be ready for the next thing, she had only breath enough to say, "Seth Dayne," holding out the permit.

"Yes, yes, you want to see him," he answered, already half-way back to the invisible treadles. "He's with

Henderson. Here, Adam," addressing the rotary boy, "run and call Seth Dayne. Have a seat, madam. Well, Phipps, what did you find out?" and Mr. Hooper stretched his finger toward one of a row of men on a settee, who had come in one by one and were gloomily waiting for their turn. The finger sprang back as if it were a much-improved mouse-trap.

Phipps understood this to be Mr. Hooper's mode of beckoning, for he rose and approached, like a school-boy called on to recite. After moving his head several times up and down like a pump-handle, he brought up a small stream of speech, and began an account of what he had found out, plainly making himself interesting to his listener by what, to less attentive ears, seemed a blur of words about a "he," a "belt," and a "bill."

Adam, who was a corpulent boy on whose constitution and rotundity his expulsion from the Garden of Eden had had no injurious effect, returned and mutely reseated himself in the agreeable chair, which was one of his most esteemed compensations for having to eat bread in the sweat of his brow.

Nobody but the two females noticed Adam; nor when Seth Dayne came in, a moment later, did anybody but them heed his arrival. Phipps kept on with his account, resuming his pumping whenever he was likely to give out; the men on the settee continued to take an increasingly pessimistic view of life, presumably because Phipps had got in ahead of them; and Adam wheeled as smoothly as a planet.

As to the meeting which took place between the three at one side, it was not of a kind to attract attention. At home they had not been accustomed to demonstrative behavior, which Mrs. Dayne always pronounced "soft"; at least none of them except Mr. Dayne and Leo had been, and they never ventured upon it unless alone. But

the circumstances of these three were now such as to make them cling closer together, to make them feel more sharply their need of one another.

Mrs. Dayne and Seth did not part hands for a moment after the shaking, and as to the brother and sister, they looked at each other doubtfully, as considering the propriety and feasibility of a kiss, and ended by touching lips. This was the younger son, whom Mr. Brackett had mistaken for the older. He had changed, but his relatives scarcely noticed it. Everything was changed — he only proportionately.

The brief conversation went on in a low monotone, to the distant accompaniment of what Phipps had found out. Almost the first Seth said was —

"You know? Mr. Brackett has told you?"

"Yes."

"We won't say much here — there's no chance, you see. I've planned for you and Leo to stop with me. The boarding-mistress expects it. We can talk this evening. I can have a minute with you at noon, too, and tell you how to get to Luke."

"How soon can I go to him?"

"This afternoon. The poor little fellow's looking for you, though he feels pretty sore about his quarters. But there's one thing I want to know now — I won't wait for it; and I've made up my mind that if that's all right I won't care for anything else. Did father suspect anything of this, before —"

"No."

"Thank God for that! We shall pull through."

Seth, like the other children, had always been fond of his father; yet now he showed no sense of loss in his death.

"Pull through?" said Mrs. Dayne, in an indescribable tone.

Seth saw what was in her mind.

"Yes," said he, "there's no doubt of it. If father had known what disgrace we'd brought on him, it would have taken the courage all out of me. I wanted him to die before he heard. I wanted him to; and so did Luke. Father's gone—and everybody's got to; and thinking that he didn't have to suffer by this gives me some grit to be a man while I stay, no matter what happens, and to make it all right for us. It can be made all right, this thing can. It has gone against us pretty hard here among strangers; but it's taken hold of the poor little fellow worst. But things look brighter, and we shall get clear."

"Get clear! Then you are guilty?"

Seth's checked gingham blouse, off the same piece as Leo's dress, suddenly lost its wrinkles and bagginess by reason of the quick straightening and shaking back of its wearer's lofty shoulders and thin neck. Seth Dayne stepped backward from his mother, his head thrown up. His short, wood-colored curls—carpenter's shavings they used to be called at home—instead of standing on end seemed rather to have been scorched into closer rings. At last his lips, which had tightened reprovingly, opened with, "Didn't you know better than that?"

His mother did know better than that now.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A FAMILY DIFFERENCE.

"I DIDN'T do it, mother,—I didn't; except as I told Mr. Brackett. What I told him is *true*."

"I believe you, Luke."

"But nobody else does?" he inquired, half interrogatively, half pleadingly.

This was the second visit Mrs. Dayne had paid to her imprisoned son, Seth's "little fellow." Both times a similar conversation had taken place; but she could not give the assurance the boy longed to hear.

Her stay of a week or two in Seth's only home—a bare house, with a parrot in it having a habit of asking "What is it?" and of saying "Good-by!" and a dog so like uncle Hugh's, save in being white, that he passed among the Daynes for the Colonel's ghost—had not convinced her that her sons were considered innocent.

To be sure, the eleven men who found food and lodging there seldom saw Mrs. Dayne, and had no occasion to address her on that or any other topic.

One of these men was the same whose back she had seen in the counting-house, and all of them were from the New England Machine—for so the establishment was popularly called, "Company" being understood; and indeed the whole gradually grown building, with its notched and chimneyed roofs and various square towers, might have been itself a huge machine, with cogs up,

only waiting for the gaps to be filled by supplementary gear from above before getting into motion.

But no mention of the little difficulty was made to Mrs. Dayne even by the boarding-mistress, a fat woman with her bonnet on one side and an eye to neighborhood affairs.

This woman, naturally a widow, was of somewhat doubtful nationality, though probably from one of the British provinces in America. To accompany her bonnet,—its trimmings knotted in a rapture of bows, also on one side,—Mrs. Campbell possessed a cloak with so many dangling beads that when she walked she reminded one of sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Her speech betrayed that she had been deprived of contact with the refined, though she made a commendable effort to redeem herself from the injury of this circumstance by adorning her discourse, when she could remember to do so, with long words blazing on a background of bad grammar. She also cherished, as a matter of interest and gentility, one or two imaginary ailments, which she bewailed as likely to take her to what she constantly alluded to as the "bone-yard." Yet not even she ever alluded to the little difficulty. Certainly a hearty conviction that here was a case of wrongful accusation would not show itself in this way.

Mr. Brackett had denominated that part of Brackton where the New England Machine and other manufactures were located as a "tough hole." What marks must characterize a neighborhood in order to make it a tough hole it did not take the new arrivals long to learn.

There must be "tenements" whose doors are cut, scratched, and written upon, the posts dark with dirt, as though the infection of the door had begun to spread and would eventually fester over the whole. Goats, with a look of general demoralization and hair full of burdock-

burrs, must be privileged to occupy the broken doorsteps. It must be possible to observe blinds hanging by one creaking hinge, and rotting sheds, set round about with pyramidal ash-heaps, stretched behind tipsy blocks of houses — the sheds probably made largely of fence-boards formerly displaying advertisements, so that they present to the rising generation a favorable but despised opportunity of learning the alphabet in white, yellow, and black letters, promiscuously disposed and chiefly upside down.

Filthy children — children blind in one eye, children with one leg too short, children eating bread and molasses and children vainly desiring to be eating bread and molasses, children nearly all wrong and children nearly all right — must swarm and yell at their play; and their loud-mouthed mothers, with babies in their arms, must bawl after their unruly offspring.

The muddy yards must be sown with bottles, stones, bricks, rags, paper, broken crockery, old boots, battered fruit-cans, all partly covered with earth, so that they may be regarded, according to the bent of one's imagination, either as sprouting out of the ground or endeavoring to plant themselves in it. That part of the male population which has attained to the dignity of pantaloons and profanity will find its favorite amusements in shattering the glass in unoccupied dwellings, festooning clothes-lines with ragged kites, kicking old tins in the street, or jeering, with a juicy mouth, at the passer-by.

Not that a tough hole has no pleasanter traits. It always has, life itself being incongruity, and, whether in physical or spiritual things, wheat and tares being not far apart.

As you walk through a tough hole you will see some respectable places, some clean-curtained houses, every shade just half-way up, some windows of blossoming



plants whose well-doing has set even the captive bird above them singing, some neat flower-beds, some precise gravel-walks, some signs of families who are making the very best of things just where they find themselves, in this barren neighborhood of jangling bells and shrieking whistles. One of the most happy and sunny dwellings in all Utopia, by the way, was the young undertaker's; — in Summer its green yard flecked with shaded sunlight, and at all seasons, at its rear, a busy hammering by a manly hand, accompanied by snatches of blithe song; his little children toddling about his feet and playing gleefully with the chips and sawdust from the coffins and boxes.

But if Utopia had presented none of these more pleasing aspects of a tough hole, the fact would not have influenced Mrs. Dayne to choose another place of residence. This was the one spot where, under the circumstances, she wished to live, and had determined to live. The longer she remained there, the more fixed became her purpose; for before long she made the discovery that Mrs. Campbell's silence on the subject of the little difficulty was indeed not due to a charitable and unaccusing turn of mind. In short, she discovered that both Leo and herself were suspiciously watched by the landlady, who had but a vague notion of the nature of the offence charged upon the Dayne boys, but appeared to connect it in a general way with thieving, and to consider that their disease in the mother and sister would probably take the form of an unlawful hankering after silver spoons.

Mrs. Dayne, who preferred being near her sons, and had written to Mr. Brackett her reasons for not accepting his invitation to visit at his own home, had made herself useful in the boarding-house, offering to take upon herself the care of the chambers. Mrs. Campbell had refused

to receive this service, saying decidedly, "It would trouble you too much," meaning, "It would trouble me too much."

Soon, however, she had announced, "I don't mind. I should like a little help. You may make the beds, if y' please, for I don't desire to go up end down stairs—it's bad for my pipes." In speaking of a slight bronchial affection, the boarding-mistress always confounded herself with a church organ.

One morning while, with Leo's assistance, performing, according to this permission, the upstairs work, Mrs. Dayne, seized by an unaccountable impulse, dropped the pillow she was shaking, walked straight to the door, which was ajar, and looked out. There stood the landlady, with her cloth slippers in her hand, and her head, which was wrapped about with a dusting-cloth pinned with a mourning pin, stretched out in the act of peeping slyly into the room. Her light eyebrows—which were in the habit of going through a pantomime accompaniment to her words—began to be busy. They were so much lighter than her skin that, regarded artistically, they were points of glaring interest in the immediate foreground, with the rest of her face spread behind them for their better exhibition.

"Oh, here you be! I thought I'd come up end ascertain if the soap was out. It ain't my businiss to furnish it, but I'd rather than to see them men's hands without it, you can bate," and she walked in, panting, her false teeth, which were but a poor fit, moving in her open mouth, and satisfied herself that there was no scarcity of cleansing preparations. She took great pains to keep in sight the hand that held the slippers, as much as to say, "There's nothing unusual in that! I often go about in this way."

Sinking into a chair, with a sigh expressive of much

relief at finding no deficiency in saponaceous supplies, she rested one stockinged foot on her knee, and, rubbing it, remarked: "My extrem'ties are dreadf'le troublesome. They say bam Gilead's good. Do you know?"

All this time Mrs. Dayne had done nothing whatever but watch Mrs. Campbell, turning as she turned, and following her about with an indignant eye, which Mrs. Campbell tried not to encounter. Without removing the eye, she maintained a brief impressive silence. "I do not," she finally said.

"I have hard work to wear anythin' on 'em," pursued Mrs. Campbell. "Well, I'll go down now, for I've got my flats all het, and I want to git through by 'leben o'clock if I can. I'm all of a perspiration, I've hurried so"; and she resumed her felt foot-coverings and her place in the kitchen.

Mrs. Campbell manifested her want of confidence in other ways also.

To overlook such things, or go away from them, or take them from whence they came was not in Mrs. Dayne's nature.

That evening Seth appeared grave, if not cast down. Upon being asked by his mother, "Has anything about your work annoyed you?" he answered, "No, nothing about my work."

"What then?"

He did not reply directly, only saying, "I have been thinking that p'r'aps we'd better leave here soon—as soon as Luke—"

"I've been thinking that we'd better stay here; and that's what I do think," said Mrs. Dayne positively.

"I wonder what has brought you to that conclusion just when I have come to the opposite."

"Well, I have come to it. I don't intend to run away from a suspicion against me. We've always been a

respectable family, and I never yet left a bad reputation behind me anywhere; and I never will."

"That was my position at first, you remember," he said hastily.

For a moment his former zeal to "make it all right" was roused by his mother's words. She, watching him, thought, "Now he looks as he did at home." Certainly his manner had grown very sedate since he came from there, and it was not often that his old boyishness gleamed through his new exterior. Slowly, however, his expression of gravity, if not of despondency, returned. He pondered long, with fixed eyes, and at last, without moving them, and shaking his head the while, said, as though to himself, "My judgment is against it."

Evidently he was watching the result of some weighing or measuring operation of his own mind. Still speaking as though to himself, and with the fixed eyes, and accompanying his words with the shaking of the head, he added, "The probabilities are against it."

"Against what?"

"Against our making as much out of life here as we could somewhere else."

"What makes you think so?"

"I have reasons," evasively. "Some that it would please me best to keep to myself."

"Then I shall believe they are poor ones, and shall stay whether or no."

"I think you and Leo ought to leave, at any rate. It's on your account more than ours that I think we'd better go."

Seth had adopted a way of separating the two male from the two female members of the family.

"Then tell your reasons."

"Well, we've got to look at a thing all round; and I think the distrust felt towards Luke and me will extend to you and Leo."

"It has extended."

For the first time Seth withdrew his gaze from the imaginary scales, and, as it were, changed places with his mother, taking the interrogative end of the conversation.

"How do you know?"

"By being dogged and insulted by a woman that goes round like a spirit in worsted slippers—that's how," said Mrs. Dayne, using in her indignation somewhat confusing rhetoric.

They were sitting in the "parlor"—a piece of whose floor, by the way, looked up obtrusively through the fringed hole in the middle of the carpet. The boarders, who were out, as usual, after supper, would presently be returning. Downstairs—or down-cellar, as Seth insisted on calling basements, to which he had taken a violent dislike—was the sound of clinking tea-dishes and the thud of Mrs. Campbell's fleshy, soft-shod feet. Seth shut the door.

"Then you know it? That you are suspected? I was in hopes to spare you that; but as long as you see it for yourself, I may as well admit that that's what has changed my mind. I did think 'twas best to stay and live the other down. I never thought of doing anything else so long as I was planning for nobody but Luke and me; but since you came I've been thinking on it more deeply—taking everything into the account."

"You needn't take me into the account. I'm capable of managing myself," said Mrs. Dayne, who was irritated by having Seth think for her at all, and was quick to put down any attempt to usurp her place or authority.

The young man was wounded at having his thoughtfulness for his mother and sister, with no one now but him to lean upon, thus repulsed; but he probably continued to take everything into the account, for he only flushed and went on:

"I thought we had no business — no business — to bring you and Leo into our misfortune. Now examine both sides: Utopia isn't an easy place to — convert. It's a place filled, for the most part, with a kind of people that we've never been used to. You can't make much of an impression on them short of knocking them down. It would take a good while to live an idea into them, especially one like this, that doesn't come natural. I mean the idea that anybody accused is innocent. It's a place that the police swoop down on pretty often, and pull in — I've caught some of the terms that are used here," he said apologetically — "somebody that's been offending. 'Tisn't gen'rally, I take it, that that person's anything but deserving of what he gets. I think it comes partly from burrowing underground. It's opposed to nature, I say, for human beings to live down-cellar. Now suppose we should stay here. Should we ever be intimate enough with most of these folks to convince them that the police were on the wrong track when they pulled us in?"

"Go on," said Mrs. Dayne, implying that she was disposed to give him the satisfaction of listening to the end of all his vain arguments.

"No, we never should be intimate enough with them for that. How has it worked so far — since this trouble began? I've been as careful as possible. Do they trust me? No. But this, to-day, was a little the worst — this against you and Leo. A dozen men cautioned not to leave anything in their rooms that they didn't want to lose! Every man in the shop'll hear this, and then go home. How shall we reach all those people with our proposed good lives? It looks to me as if this blot would spread faster than we can live; and whatever we do, no matter how orderly, will be looked at askew; for I tell you I'm learning that a bad name covers every good act with suspicion, and a fellow can do pretty near

anything under cover of a high reputation. Still when I had only Luke and myself in mind, I was for sticking and compelling them to respect us as honest men."

His mother noticed that Seth always now spoke of himself as a man. Why should he not? He had come of age. She said nothing. She had her reasons for wanting him to talk.

"I didn't want to make a failure at the very start, you see," he resumed, "and call myself beaten; but I hold it's a man's duty to use his judgment, especially if he's got others besides himself to think of. To fit yourself to circumstances, to know how to conduct yourself to the best advantage in every situation,—that's what I consider's the desirable thing. It's better to go by common sense, if 't isn't quite so fine, than to waste your days trying for something that can't be had. Now it's ten to one that the longer we stay here the more we shall fix it in the minds of these people that we ain't what we ought to be. They've got that idea, and time'll only set it. Where's the wit in trusting that what's wrong in the pattern'll come right in the casting?"

During this long speech Seth had kept his eyes on the weighing process, speaking low, as though, happening to stand in range of something which the others—his sister being present—could not see, he were merely announcing what passed before him; but now he glanced at his mother. She still preserved silence, which, to the active party in a conversation, is sometimes more provocative of speech than speech itself.

"I'm afraid you don't understand me," he said; for, as he progressed, he had had a growing apprehension that she was not taking everything into the account. "Now," again fixing his eyes and beginning to describe, "suppose we should go away from here as soon as Luke is free—and there's one thing about that: if our case never comes

to trial, there'll be a smaller show than ever for our standing right. It'll look as if Mr. Brackett's influence was all that saved us. He says I don't know much about courts and their twists and turns — and I don't; but — we're not guilty. That's all I stand on, and I don't think beyond it. Well," and Seth threw back his head and straightened himself in dismissal of that matter, "as I was saying, if we should settle at a distance, with uncle Ferdinand, for instance, — there's nothing to prevent that now, — what would hinder our beginning to live, at once, without this thing to weigh us down?"

Seth meditatively shut one eye and turned the other, full force, upon the weighing.

"We should soon be forgotten in this miserable hole. And — well — even if we stayed and could accomplish our object, what would it amount to? Would the game be worth the powder? Besides, this is no place to bring up Leo in."

The party alluded to, who was standing, a thoughtful listener, with her elbow on the mantelshelf and her head on her hand, looked womanly enough to be regarded as already brought up.

"When Mrs. Campbell warns her boarders —" Mrs. Dayne spoke as though she had known this all along, then paused in the hope that Seth would disclose more. "When Mrs. Campbell warns her boarders —"

"I wanted to fly in among them and lay about me with a heavy hand, when I overheard them talking of it," said Seth; "but I knew," calculatingly, "that assault and battery on my part wouldn't make folks think any better of you — nor of me either. Anybody's got to be governed by reason, and look at a thing all round."

Seth had disclosed nothing new, and his mother proceeded: "When Mrs. Campbell warns her boarders to look out for me as a thief, there is only one course that



I will pursue; and that isn't to turn my back on the enemy. Your practical policy is nothing but cowardice. I'll stand my ground. I'll show that woman up as a liar. I—" Here the speaker's voice grew loud, and she denounced the landlady in the most vigorous terms; for Mrs. Dayne, though subject to spasmodic muteness, had, in general, an active tongue.

Seth, at first half inclined to believe himself a craven for having forsaken the heroic line for one of simple expediency, fell to wondering about that peculiarity of his mother—he did not know what to call it—which prevented her from seeing any difference between great and small.

"For instance," he thought, "now here she is going on against Mrs. Campbell as if Mrs. Campbell was something to go on against. It would be precisely the same if an acknowledged lunatic or idiot crossed her. She'd strike out with the same ferocity."

Leo was saying, "Why, mother, perhaps she felt bound, as long as we are strangers, to put the boarders on their guard. I can see how it might have been."

"Leo's always so reasonable—just like father," commented Seth mentally. "Why can't mother be like them?"

He knew that, come what might, his mother would, for the present, remain in Utopia. All their interests might be elsewhere; from every point of the compass thousand-handed Opportunity might sign to them, and she would not go. He wondered if her position were really the noble one; if doing things that one sets out to do, and refusing to recognize any danger, is always courageous; if it does not sometimes take as much strength to give up as it does to go on; if what seemed to be great was sometimes small; if, for instance, what seemed to be great in his mother's decision was only small—petty

pride, petty anger, petty selfishness, petty stubbornness; if she — she, *his mother* — was only a common “crooked stick,” just like other crooked sticks! No, he could not say that yet; but why could not she see differences? But she could not. She never did.

“At home she used to keep us away from school for any small thing, till we got out of the regular habit of going. Of course she’d speak of school once in a while; but then she’d forget again, and drift along pretty comfortably if the small things at home went right. Now there she couldn’t see the difference between long and short. She was satisfied if she got the wood sawed — a thing of a day; while schooling’s for a lifetime. It don’t please me any to be told I’ve got more schooling, after all, than a good many; for I might have been given double as well as not — as well as not,” and the intelligent mechanic sighed as those sigh who know themselves the victims of an irretrievable and unnecessary loss.

“Never teaching Leo anything either!” he continued to himself. “Too busy to spend a minute on her children, and never stopping to think what all the hurry’s for; never once thinking that bringing up her children was of any more consequence than getting the washing out. Yet far enough from what you can call a bad mother, too; and mother’s very energetic — there’s no denying that.”

Seth conciliated his conscience, made a little uneasy by the fact that his reflections had taken a color not strictly in obedience to the fifth commandment, by this stout assertion — which was true if what he meant by energy was grinding doggedly on, like a machine, without discrimination in favor of the most needed work.

“Well, that’s where she is all the time,” he mused; “can’t see any odds between small and great, nor between long and short.”

Then Seth fell to wondering whether there were any differences — real ones; whether much schooling and little schooling may not, somehow or other, be about the same thing, and whether all the conditions in which men are placed, and which look so varied, are not, when you come to take everything into the account, somehow all of one element.

“In this way now: if there’s a better state of existence and we’ve got to be improved for it — why, here we are, the human race, a mixed lot of us. Some of us lack perseverance, we’ll say; some, honesty; some, kindness; and so forth. Some of us will steal; some, cheat; some, rob; but we’re all wanted up above — we’ve got to be brought up to the mark. Now you can’t use the same kind of treatment to bring a knave up to the mark that’ll be needed to bring a man there that’s only lazy. What’s the consequence? You’ve got to bring all kinds of processes to bear. We’re like materials. Take wood and iron. Suppose it’s wanted to bring these up to the mark, after their kind. You saw the wood, you melt the iron. Quite a difference in the operations. The wood couldn’t be brought up to the mark by putting it into a furnace, like the iron,—’twould only destroy it; and it wouldn’t be to the advantage of iron to treat it like wood. So you’ve got to have all kinds of machines — by machines I mean circumstances — to work on the different kinds of men with. So we see a good many sorts of them. One man’s being deprived by circumstances: another’s being petted by them. One man’s being knocked down by circumstances: another’s being hoisted up by them. But whether, if they get the usage that’s best adapted to the nature of the stock in them, and are finally brought up to the mark, it isn’t all one? Whether the furnace isn’t the same to the iron that the saw is to the wood?”

These inquiries puzzled the young man so much, and

especially the all-important point whether every one really does get the management best for him, or whether the machines only grind haphazard, benefiting or bruising as it chances, that he did not pay great attention to his mother until she was bringing her discourse to a close.

She was repeating: "Whether my sons stay or not,—though, for their own credit, I should hope they would,—I shall stay, and fight the slanders of Mrs. Campbell and everybody like her; and as to Leo, she shall stay too, and fight them, and kill them, or"—Mrs. Dayne opened the door to go—"or they shall kill Leo—we'll see which."

The hollow entries took it up and rolled it about from one sullen door to another, till it might have been that in each barren room some hoarse goblin inmate was exultingly crying, "We'll see which! We'll see which!"

## CHAPTER X.

### A TALKATIVE ENEMY.

"TURNUPS, p'tatoes, cabbagis, on-i-o-n-s!" cried a voice in the street the morning after the foregoing conference; and wheels, rattling on the frozen ground, stopped in front of Mrs. Campbell's house.

Breakfast was over and the men were gone. Mrs. Dayne and Leo, who had just repaired to the scene of their lately assumed labors, were opening windows upstairs, thus, presumably, affording a favorable opportunity of egress to the swarm of phantom demons, with echoes for voices, whose derisive tongues were so clamorous the night before.

However that may have been, nothing was heard at present but the unmythical lips persistently calling, "Turnups, p'tatoes, cabbagis, on-i-o-n-s!"

Leo was much interested in the new phases of life "in Trenburg," as, though much corrected, she was apt to term Brackton, forgetting in its lively scenes — lively to her inexperience — that it was only an adjunct of the larger city. Thus she was attracted now to look out, saying, "That man sounds as if he might be ragged inside." He had indeed a voice like a rasp and saw in diabolical collusion.

Leo's simplicity led her into other errors besides that of confounding Brackton with Trenburg. She was constantly drawn out in rustic sympathy toward various

persons. Pedlers of all sorts came in for a large share of her commiseration; and, not being able to see the opposite side of a noticeable hill that frowned blackly down on Utopia, nor to know that one of the prosperous places she would in that case have beheld was owned by this same individual, she pitied him.

She did not understand how Mrs. Campbell could ever refuse to buy of this class of unfortunates, especially when they pleaded so earnestly, and reduced the price as, it appeared to Leo, they never would unless driven by their necessities. It caused her a real pang when, with a business-like bluntness which seemed to her little short of brutal, the landlady refused, perhaps, to so much as look at very meritorious beets, or, if under the pressure of an imminent dinner, rejected with indignation the most advantageous proposals respecting pie-apples,—while as to pins, combs, and lead pencils, she scarcely permitted them to be brought at any time within ken.

One day, not long after her arrival, Leo's distress was brought to a climax. Mrs. Campbell's hardness of heart, which any well-instructed person would have recognized as only that ability to take thought for one's self and for the morrow so essential in the present circumstances of the world, manifested itself by her slamming the door in the face of a beggar—an old woman in a red and green shawl, and embracing a faded umbrella held diagonally across her breast.

This old woman declared, in very broken English, that she had been traveling to relatives by train; that she alighted too soon, having misunderstood the name of the station—probably announced with that distinctness of articulation for which railroad men are justly celebrated; that she was trying to gather enough money to enable her to finish her journey. Having concluded, she shut her mouth so tight in despondency that her only teeth,

three under ones, lay outside her upper lip like so many yellow shoe-pegs.

Such was the tale. Leo, being in the parlor, had heard it. Mrs. Campbell regarded it as at least apocryphal, and proceeded to act upon the only wise principle in such cases.

Shutting the door as nearly as was compatible with keeping her face in the gap, she inquired sternly, "Why didn't you go roun' to the back door? You hadn't ought 'o have made me ascend upstairs. No. I never give money. It ain't well. Sometimes I give nourishmunt; but not gener'ly. You never know who you're a-givin' to"; and, withdrawing to a place of safety, she shut the door as violently as if she were a bureau of associated charities giving lessons in the right method of dealing with dishonest street-begging.

Pausing at the parlor door, she beheld Leo standing, in a state of quivering agitation, in the middle of the room. As the landlady looked, the smile which had followed the performance of duty, and the intention, with which she had evidently stopped, of making comment upon the episode, both faded away. Rolling up one eyebrow like a scroll, and examining Leo with meditative severity, she inquired, "Are you a-playin' it? I think so."

Leo, unaccustomed to the enlightened forms of expression that prevailed in Utopia, received no definite idea as to the nature of Mrs. Campbell's suspicions, but, aware that "playin' it" must be something reprehensible, said, "No, ma'am."

"Are you pretendin' to pity everybody, so's to make folks think you're turrible good yourself?" continued Mrs. Campbell, becoming intelligible, and too much moved to employ her decorative vocabulary.

Leo, on the brink of tears, and prevented from a plunge

chiefly by surprise, made no answer. Here Mrs. Campbell seemed to have a faint perception that possibly the girl did not deserve this harshness. Quickly hardening, however, she went on:

"But then you must be one or the other — either awfle deep or awfle shaller. If you're a-puttin' it on, you're awfle deep; end if you reely pity ev'ry lyin' fraud, you're awfle shaller." Mrs. Campbell shook her head in repudiation of the latter theory.

"Does everybody here lie?" inquired Leo, with her deadly directness and usual overlooking of oblique consequences.

"Well," said Mrs. Campbell slowly, while one eyebrow slid serpentinely toward the other as though to dart upon it, "all that whine from door to door does. Why, I've seen it in print!"

If Leo had known with what tremendous difficulty Mrs. Campbell got a printed idea into her head, and, having got it in, with how much more tremendous difficulty she got it out, and that the stray utterances which a busy life permitted her to con of that extolled educator, the newspaper press, were regarded by her as of nearly equal authority with Divine Writ, possibly she would not have said, as she did doubtfully, "Aren't any of them unhappy, then? I should think some must be sometimes. I don't understand how anybody could choose such a hard life; but if they are driven to it, why — Then it's so easy and natural to be poor! And so hard not to be! No," reflectively, and growing more certain, "I don't believe the newspaper."

Leo was already beginning to show something of her father's tendency to original and objectionable thinking.

"Anyway," she continued, "there's something in the Bible about 'angels unawares,'" and she nearly forgot Mrs. Campbell's presence as she pressed her face sidewise



against the window, to see if she could discover the old woman going up the street. "Father used to say it often. I—"

"Don't you kote no Scripture to me!" blazed Mrs. Campbell. "I won't stan' that! End of your age, too! It ain't common savility to them that are older! As if you knew more end was better than anybody—"

"Oh, I—"

"Don't you speak another word till I git through! I'm a-goin' to tell you what I think o' you. You've bean a-settin' up, end a-settin' up, ever sence you've bean here, to be mighty good, end to be half killed by all I done; but this beats all—a-settin' up against—everybody. Vagrunts hadn't ought 'o be encouraged—there's bean a grea' deal said about it. Besides, they can call on the officers. The Board'll go anywhere end find out all about 'em, end if they're worthy they'll git help. If they're sick, they can have the ambulunce sent end take 'em to the hospittle. But they're never worthy. They don't want to work, end they don't want to be inquared into. I work, no matter how painful I am, nor how poor my cirkelation is—which is very poor, and me likely to go to the bone-yard any day; end here are you havin' over texts in the face end eyes— But I know what you do it for. You do it for a show, end you think you'll gain by it with all that notices you."

Here Leo made a deprecatory movement. Mrs. Campbell, however, would not let her speak.

"Yes! You needn't think it's escaped me that most o' your sympathizin's done when some o' the boarders are roun'. I've observed it; but it ain't sing'lar to my mind. You're none too young to want to make your mark with them. I've got a good name, if I do say it; end the best thing you can do, with *your* name,—I'll tell you as a friend,—is to git some umbleniss into you, end not put yourself forward for an angil—"

"I don't!" cried Leo, thunderstruck.

"You do! End if you don't stop it, it won't be two monts before everybody'll find you out the same as I have. Some besides me in this house see through you now, unless I'm mistaken. I meant to have held in, end let you go on as you pleased; but as I've watched your deepniss gittin' worse end worse I've longed to let you know I wasn't fooled by it; end this mornin' I couldn't keep still any longer," and Mrs. Campbell tripped downstairs with unusual lightness, her ample bosom shaking and her teeth liable to expulsion.

As to Leo, she stood as she had during this whole tirade, the express image of Astonishment.

"Why-y-y! I didn't! How could she see all that plan in me when there wasn't any!"

The consideration of this inquiry took so long that Leo sat down on the bed of roses which the brilliant sofa in the parlor represented. Then she sprang up under the impulse to tell her mother, but immediately thought better of it. It was a wholly new, womanly inclination to bear vexations alone. Seth was trying to be strong in his trouble, and she must try to be so too. She must learn to carry at least her own burdens; and this matter was one involving nobody else. Her mother had enough already to vex her. No, she would not disclose this. As to Mrs. Campbell, she should behave toward her just as if nothing had happened, and be very careful not to give her any further reason to entertain hard thoughts.

Leo could usually find herself partly or wholly to blame in any difficulty which arose. Now she recalled the occasions upon which she had manifested unhappiness at seeing the various objects of her pity rebuffed. There had indeed generally been some witness besides Mrs. Campbell to these occurrences; always one and the same witness, too, she found, as she traveled on from point

to point in her review,—always John Follansbee, or “Jack,” as everybody called him, the person who had been observed turned face to the wall in the office of the New England Machine on the day of their arrival.

He had what might be called half or two-thirds of a situation there, being dropped or taken up according to the fluctuations of clerical work. Hence he was much at home, and when there pervaded the lower rooms, performing many services for Mrs. Campbell, who was understood to “allow” for them in board.

When Leo remembered these things she could, by stepping from her own standpoint to Mrs. Campbell’s, see how her conduct might appear to the landlady as it had. Her conclusion was that Mrs. Campbell had much apparent ground for thinking as she did of her, but none whatever for her views on almsgiving.

Starting up from the flowery couch, Leo ran to the door to look for the old woman, whom the slow process of asking charity might have detained in the neighborhood. In her precipitation she nearly stumbled over the person in question, who, as she explained in trepidation, had sat down on the steps to rest. Finding this inmate of the house favorable to her, however, she repeated her story. Leo had no money of her own except that in the precious spotted box. Could she give that?

“I suppose father’d want me to,” she said aloud, thoughtfully.

“Ya,” mumbled the old woman, referring to a divine fatherhood.

“I could keep the box,” continued Leo, “to remember him by. I shouldn’t forget him without anything. He would understand.”

“Ya—oonderstoont,” echoed the old woman.

Leo rushed upstairs, and came down with the box.

As she turned its contents into the beggar's hand, Jack Follansbee, out of the counting-house midway between morning and noon, came upon the two in time to note what had been done. Seeing Leo about to go in, he politely threw open the door, and, closing it after her, remained himself outside.

The sound of his voice, and of his feet upon the hollow wooden steps under which was situated the basement kitchen, having come to Mrs. Campbell, she hastily remounted the stairs, and, passing the parlor without knowing that Leo was there, presented herself, with her recovered vocabulary, at the front door.

"Now, Jack," she said, in a voice of badinage, "I've got to have a supervision over you the same as I would over a baby — you're so chicken-hearted! Don't make a fool o' yourself, for you know they're impositors; but still when you see 'em you can't say No."

Jack was looking after the old woman, who had been slowly getting down the steps.

"I've drove 'er off once this mornin'," remarked the landlady, in a way which implied that she had it in contemplation to repeat that service to good society. "Come! Come in!" as the old woman moved away.

Jack did not start. "I was thinking," he said.

"Well, come in where it's warm. Your thoughts'll freeze here."

Jack still kept thinking.

"Come!" repeated Mrs. Campbell with some displeasure, and in an authoritative manner which made Leo wonder how she dared to speak so to one over whom she had no right to rule. To her still greater surprise, Mr. Follansbee, instead of expressing any opposition to this female superintendence, obeyed with docility, stopping only to scrape his feet of invisible mud, which was a conciliatory habit of his. She felt sure, however, that

Mrs. Campbell had not arrived in time to prevent him from giving.

From the first, chance had exhibited to Leo only good traits in this man. There was nothing to show her that he had any that were not so good. As he and Mrs. Campbell went downstairs, she heard him remark pleasantly, "If you are to protect all the infants in the house, I fear your labors will be doubled. It seems there are two of us now."

"Wha' do you mean?"

"Miss Dayne and I."

"That girl's the most—"

Here the kitchen door was shut, and Mrs. Campbell's words were no longer distinguishable; but she continued to talk in a high-pitched, indignant voice, which acted as a spell on Leo. She found herself straining to catch the import of the opprobrious utterances, but heard only the screaming parrot calling "Leo! Leo!" as he had learned to do. Finally, under an increasing realization that she was listening, she broke away with a movement as though from a physical barrier, and tore upstairs to the attic occupied as a sleeping-room by her mother and herself, clutching, meanwhile, the empty spotted box.

In conformity with her determination, Leo kept to herself this trying incident of her life under Mrs. Campbell's roof, but it had influenced all her subsequent behavior, making her, for one thing, particularly careful to keep out of Mr. Follansbee's way.

Now, as she stood looking down at the pedler of vegetables, who, enthroned upon the seat of his wagon and backed by divers barrels, sat looking curiously up at her, they made an impressive tableau: he leaning forward, elbows on knees, feet spread and resting on the low foreboard, a rein in each hand, head thrown back, inquisitive eyes raised, while he comfortably waited for

his vocal advertisements to bring custom; she protected by enclosure within the room, yet shrinking back into it to escape the staring orbs lifted to search her. Yet, though she receded before the look she encountered, there was nothing sinister about it. Those pale-blue eyes, under brows like two little pitched roofs, were not unpleasant. Possibly they were able to look out right well for number one, and, when half closed and surrounded by those numerous wrinkles whose absence is fatal to sagacious calculations in trade, they might have been laughing at their own efficiency. A semi-circle of stiff gray whiskers depended like a knob from the pedler's chin. When he spoke he was apt to take hold of this with a twist, as though he thereby opened his mouth.

Leo had scarcely withdrawn from his inspection when Mrs. Campbell, or that proportion of her resident in the head, came into his view, this circumstance being effected by her standing on a chair in the kitchen and projecting the upper part of her person through the basement window.

"Hullo, Mr. King," said she, as one who greets an old acquaintance. "What 'v' you got this mornin'?"

"Hullo!" answered Mr. King, after having twisted the knob. "This is a nice mornin', *ain't* it?" as though any lack of agreement on the part of Mrs. Campbell would be quite unbearable. "I've got veg'tables—all kinds," he continued, in a voice calculated to make a hearer think of the voice rather than of vegetables. "I guess you'll need some, won't you? I see you've got comp'ny," with a glance at the upper windows.

"They're the remainder o' the Daynes. The whole family's here now."

"Go'n' to stand by one 'nother, h'm? Wal, that ain't so bad, is it? It's a good thing for your friends and

relation to stand by you. Oh! Did I tell you 'bout that scrape o' Childs's?"

"Scrape? No. What scrape?"

"Wal, you know Turner. They say he give him a mortgage, and he's jest found out t' he didn't own the place."

"Who give a mortgage? Look 'ere!" and Mrs. Campbell began to draw herself in. "I smell my bread. Jack, see if it's burnin'. Empt that pot, too. I'm bakin' end brewin', Mr. King. You come in. I want some p'taters; end I do wish the' was rhubub this time o' year," she concluded, getting down from the chair.

Soon the hawker's voice filed its way upstairs from the kitchen into the ears of the two who, having finished their work and not caring to meet the stranger, had sat down to await his departure. This was so long delayed, however, as to hint that Mr. King was either imparting or hearing something very interesting, possibly both.

At length the absorbing interview was terminated — none too soon to save the patience of several women who, with shawls over their heads, had congregated about Mr. King's wagon, and who had begun to declare what otherwise never could have been known — that they couldn't be expected to buy if there wasn't anybody to buy of. Upon the reappearance of the missing pedler, they unanimously professed themselves to have been persuaded that he was "swallowed."

## CHAPTER XI.

### LADY AND RITUAL.

THAT part of Brackton which we have seen was far enough from being representative of it all. Indeed, the "tough" or Utopian district was much despised by the true Bracktonite, and regarded as an outlying and barbarian province improperly taken in from Mercer when Brackton's original boundaries were altered. Brackton was a town with factions in it: an ancient and aristocratic faction desiring all things to remain as they were, and a modern and progressive faction — a sudden influx from the city — desiring all things to be changed.

The chief point of controversy between the two parties had been whether the said original boundaries should or should not be enlarged; and the brisk innovators, looking down on Utopia and Utopians as much as anybody, but perceiving that lively business interests would aid the growth and improvement for which they panted, had carried the day in legislature, and the new line had run an arm round the contemned locality, unwilling old Brackton to the contrary notwithstanding.

Between Mercer, which had trade enough without it, and Brackton, which was ashamed of it, this unattractive neighborhood smoked and steamed and ground stolidly on. A level territory of utterly distinct character, lying between the two clean, high-and-dry towns, its physical situation, no less than its internal condition, rendered it the natural object of their disdain.



The genuine Brackton was set on a hill, whose southern side, cut into wide streets with handsome houses among trees, constituted the most elegant portion of the town. This was the same noticeable hill whose reverse or northern side, covered with a growth of brush, frowned blackly down on Utopia. Near the bottom, the hill had been dug away and the earth carried elsewhere on a temporary railroad which still curved, rusty and disused, round its base. On the track stood a train of weather-beaten gravel-cars that looked as if they grew, like an unhealthy fungus, on the rails, and set one to wondering when they came there, whether anybody owned them, and whether they would ever be taken away.

At the top of the excavations, many a partly dislodged shrub, withering from life, peered shudderingly over the edge, dreading an end of misery. Below these staring sand-pits with their ring of quaking lingerers, beyond the cankered track with its fungi, beyond the sterile flat strewn with powder-blown rocks, out on the low land streaked with water, lay Utopia, originally so called in sarcasm; but the name clung.

Seen from a distance, say from the top of the hill, it assumed right proportions in the observer's eye, becoming merely a toiling, moiling small adjunct of Brackton, the big school-house, with many rows of windows, prominently in the midst. From here its buildings—set close together in spots, and, when one was in among them, seeming hopeless and huddled—called up no more disagreeable thought than that they had been placed very close to conveniences for sailing or swimming at a moment's notice. Certainly, however, they had a very different air from those on the southern slope. Indeed, the few houses which had climbed up from that slope, and thus commanded a view of Utopia, had all turned their backs upon it with the utmost scorn, if not with an intention of running down again.

Mrs. Campbell's house — one of the decent sort, which could be picked out from the summit of the hill — had nothing to distinguish it from its neighbors of the decent sort; but one never knows what share of the extraordinary disturbances that move in the depths of human life, through the action of the forces ever operating in the heart of man, nor what consequent culminations, any habitation may enclose.

It was Sunday morning, and the church-bells were ringing; not those of Utopia,—for it had none,—but those of both Brackton and Mercer. They had been calling to one another over Utopia's head before the frostiness had melted out of the still air, and now, in the sunniness of middle forenoon, were tolling a sad last invitation.

Two or three of the boarders were filling the sunshine in Mrs. Campbell's stove-warmed parlor with tobacco smoke, thus causing that apartment to wear the most positive of Sunday aspects, enhanced by their own shaven, slippered, and clean-shirted persons, and by a redolence of fresh newspapers. Mrs. Dayne and Leo, being informed by one of these men that Brackton was by a trifle the nearer town, had taken their way thither, and now found themselves among its spires; but the bells had been quiet for some minutes when the belated church-goers hesitated before the first religious edifice they came to.

Nobody was to be seen near at hand on either broad sidewalk of the bright winter thoroughfare. A carriage or two rolled by, and at a distance there were some loiterers who would be a long time coming up. A baker, with square white cap, white apron, and an appearance of flour upon his trousers, emerged for a fleeting moment from an alleyway opposite, but, upon perceiving the two women, hastily withdrew.

Leo looked up with some awe at the imposing structure before them, with its many angles. It was very different from the bleak little meeting-house at home; and in truth this building was a pleasing object for any eye to rest upon, especially in the season when its vines, now only a network of rattling stalks, murmured round it with a thousand leafy mouths.

When a burst of music so strong and sweet and fresh that Leo thought it could scarcely come from any choir but God's in heaven reached the listeners' ears, she was inconsolable because they could not go in. They had entered the porch, and found a pair of closed inner doors, with brazen bands, which to their unaccustomed eyes had a fortified and forbidding air. Mrs. Dayne reminded Leo that they could come again and be in season. She added, however, that she thought the church was "Catholic."

"Catholic!" whispered Leo, aghast; for to her that name stood for something dark, monstrous, uncanny. Occasional sermons, infallibly explanatory of prophecies relating to a scarlet woman blazing with jewels and riding on a scarlet beast, were chiefly responsible for this. Though never directly taught to detest Papacy, Leo had unconsciously taken, as though from the very atmosphere, her horror of it.

"Or it may be Episcopal," said Mrs. Dayne. "Some of them, I've been told, are getting to be about as good as Catholics"—meaning about as bad.

"Oh, no! They can't be!" said Leo, beginning to feel at home again; "for that's Mrs. Thompson's church."

"I s'pose it's changed since she was young," indifferently.

Just as they were leaving they met a young lady, with bright-red cheeks and heavy mourning, hurrying in. She passed them at first, but turned, inquiring in low, fine tones, and with a smile that showed a flash of ivory, "Would you like a seat?"

Mrs. Dayne, insensibly pitching her own voice lower in sympathy with this delicate one, the result being a somewhat mincing manner, replied with circumlocution, "We intended to go in, but found the services begun, and being strangers,—only two or three weeks here,—and not knowing what church it was, we made up our minds to go home."

"Oh, it is The Church—the Episcopal Church. Its special name is Church of the Intercessor," was the answer, given with complete confidence that objection to that form of worship was out of the question. "The sexton is just inside the door to usher visitors. You had better come with me."

Although by contrast with this lady—or girl, for she looked youthful—Leo knew herself even shabbier and more out of joint with surroundings than the spirit of style and pretentious prosperity pervading Brackton had previously made her, yet she was glad to turn back, being in no wise inclined to succumb to the sense of utter loneliness that threatened to overcome her.

"I won't give up," she protested inwardly. "There's no reason why beautiful churches and houses and clothes should make poor people feel shut out. They ought to remember that they're just as much to God as anybody; and I will remember it, if such grand things do make me lonesome at first."

After waiting a moment for the singing to begin,—they would make less disturbance then, their conductress said,—the trio entered. The promised sexton took charge of Leo and her mother, and their acquaintance went to her place in a pew already occupied by a row of elderly females, looking, save that they wore the same heavy mourning, totally unlike the new-comer.

The elegant warm-carpeted church, with its colored windows, particularly that gorgeous one in the chancel

with the figure of Jesus carrying a lamb in his bosom; its glittering organ-pipes; its robed clergyman; its interspersed chanting; its responding congregation — all this was very new and awe-inspiring to the girl who now for the first time witnessed ceremonies more impressive than the weekly ones in the bare, resounding Methodist house at home; but, besides these things, there was one other to call Leo's attention — the demeanor of the lady who had brought them in, and who sat a little way in front of them.

There was certainly a remarkable magnetism in this slender figure, something to draw the eye irresistibly, something to set one's romantic fancies to work,— a swaying, pliant figure that, spite of the rosy healthfulness of the cheek, looked fragile enough to droop presently under the weight of its draperies of crape, like a flower beaten by too careless winds and rains.

The black veil, so squarely and shadily disposed as faintly to suggest the nun, swept amply round her, like an enveloping robe. The little, black-gloved hands held the rich book, with a conspicuous cross on its side. Almost too ponderous for their soft strength the volume looked. On it the gaze was tenaciously bent. Not one glance strayed.

It was the subtle *idea* expressed by this whole individuality whose influence Leo felt. All of a man's tenderness could but leap forth under it. Leo was constantly allured by it from the contemplation of architecture and ritual. How long the lady remained on her knees just after she came in! Then, how reverent were her whispered responses, more plainly heard than anybody's else only because lisped across the background furnished by the less subdued collective voice!

There was in it all the — dare I say charm? which invests the youthful priest who, crucifying the lusts and

sacrificing the loves of life, ministers, holy hearted, at his post, howbeit with that least faint touch of sadness about him which rejected natural preciousness is under divine command not to take with it when it goes.

Mrs. Dayne, less imaginative and susceptible than her daughter, soon became tired of the rites, her enjoyment of them being much curtailed by the mistaken kindness of a person near by, who was indefatigable in passing books open at the right place, which soon became the wrong place. She therefore derived what comfort she could from the reflection that all things earthly must come to an end, even this apparently interminable "rigmarole," as she blasphemously called it.

When the benediction came, she thought this had been the longest meeting she ever attended. Great was her surprise, then, not to say despair, when the gentle flurry occasioned by the congregation rising from their knees subsided by their settling into their seats again, with the intention, as it seemed to her, of remaining forever; but the part to come was destined to be less tedious. The sermon brought to the front a personality in the shape of the rector; and for Mrs. Dayne, any infusion of human warmth made an improvement in the otherwise lifeless proceedings.

The preaching, however, was without fervor, though calmly urgent respecting the performance of certain duties. It did not contemplate the wrecked, the tossed, or the straying, but rested on the assumption that it was addressing well disposed and thoroughly grounded Christians, who, with their hands on the plough and no thought of turning back, needed only a word of admonition, perhaps of encouragement, on their usually placid way.

It was such a sermon as would naturally be written by a quiet gentleman without cant, pressing religion upon people who had it before — such a sermon, smooth, gen-

eral, and somewhat trite, as one would be sure to write who had never been exercised by great experiences, who had never felt the cruel and bloody claws with which two-sided Life tears her chosen victims — such a sermon as a man must of necessity write who, in his charity, was indisposed to admit, even to himself, that anybody found in respectable walks was very bad.

Still, to judge from the faces of his flock, all bent attentively upon him, the rector's tranquil discourse did not lack interest. His calmly flowing sentences were listened to with a complimentary if not an intense closeness, and they came to an end in season to show him possessed of the grateful oratorical virtue of knowing when to stop.

A benediction, prayers, and another benediction followed, and the people moved to go; but Mrs. Dayne, by this time fully alive to the deceptive character of benedictions when regarded as dismissals, continued to sit, being doggedly determined to see the uttermost end, if end there were. Among those passing out came their acquaintance.

"I was looking for you!" she said. "I thought you might like to stay and join the Sunday-school. Won't you" (turning to Leo) "come into my class? And I will introduce you" (speaking to Mrs. Dayne) "to our rector, and he will be so glad to have you in his class — the Bible class."

"I think I won't remain any longer," said Mrs. Dayne, again somewhat mincingly, and politely screening her reasons; "but my daughter can do as she pleases"; and almost before Leo knew it she was walking up the aisle with her new teacher, who rapped at a door that appeared so like a part of the common finishings that Leo would not have suspected it of movability.

The morning's preacher, now in a coat, opened the door.

"Oh! Miss Fessenden! I'm glad to see you. Come in," extending his hand, while the sincere affability of his manner made him look quite different from what he had in the pulpit. There, with his white surplice, gray hair, and complexion that might have turned when the hair did, and to the same tint, the small, thin man, of no guessable age, had seemed quite bloodless and chilly, especially when under a ray of blue light that fell upon him through the stained window.

"See what I've brought!" exclaimed Miss Fessenden, with pensive delight. "A scholar for Sunday-school. She's to be in my class. I was so pleased, and knew you would be, that I couldn't help bringing her to you. I hope she'll come to church, too?" she added inquiringly. "Miss — oh, I don't even know your name yet."

"Leonora Dayne," said the unsophisticated acquisition.

"Miss Dayne — Mr. Thayer, our rector, and the superintendent of our Sunday-school; so you'll soon know him well."

The rector took Leo's hand in his cordial one,—it was warm, after all,—and, awkward as she was by reason both of the ungainliness of overgrown youth and the influence of unadapted dress, he made her experience that restfulness which an unfeignedly kind and benevolent person, too truly refined to pass even one secret gleam of amusement at another's expense, is privileged to convey to one ill at ease in polite and well-clad society.

Mr. Thayer, Miss Fessenden, and Leo now descended together to the vestry, and Leo was soon installed as one of Miss Fessenden's class in the Sunday-school of the Church of the Intercessor.



## CHAPTER XII.

### A CHURCH IN EARNEST.

OBVIOUSLY, the Church of the Intercessor was not in the habit of leaving any new attendant in doubt as to whether its welcome was hearty and its interest active and unprocrastinating. Clearly, the reputation which it bore of being "a working church" was well deserved.

Before the Sunday following the somewhat singular happenings which had resulted in making Leo a rather surprised and breathless member of one of its organizations, both its colorless little rector and Miss Fessenden had — as they had said they would like to, if they might — separately found out the family and called upon it.

Very full of goodwill, and accompanied by a perfect overlooking of the Daynes' humble way of life, these visits were. They had, however, strengthened Mrs. Campbell's conviction that there was "something wrong" about those to whom the visits were paid. That Mrs. Dayne and Leo should, through once going to church, call so much attention to themselves looked dark to Mrs. Campbell, especially as she inclined to that view of Mr. Thayer and his society which found occasional expression in Brackton among those who knew nothing about it — that they were not many steps behind the Catholics, whom, by the way, Mrs. Campbell always called "Papists" and bitterly detested.

In spite, however, of his supposed unpardonable tendencies, she was not a little flattered and softened by Mr. Thayer's smiling and unceremonious manners when she

answered his rap, and by his conscientiously minute inquiries into the state of her health, which he was probably aware constantly threatened her removal to some bone-yard; for this was not his first knowledge of her. He had once met her for a moment at the house of one of his parishioners; and he apparently never forgot an individual nor his circumstances, nor failed to speak agreeably to anybody he had ever seen, if it was only a little child.

As his parochial duties took him to all parts of the town, and his assiduous performance of them kept him constantly going back and forth, he had a large desultory acquaintance. Still outside of this circle were those to whom his face and name and office were so familiar that for them to pass him as a stranger was to conform to a farcical formality.

As soon, however, as Mrs. Campbell was out of the hate-disarming presence of the clergyman, and had apprised Mrs. Dayne and Leo of his desire to see them, she remembered no more his transparent guilelessness, but returned to her former position of doubt respecting the Protestant character of his geniality; while as to Mrs. Dayne and Leo, the whole proceeding of their going direct to that church, and of their making themselves known and being immediately followed up, was, to say the least, strange. The more she pondered upon it, the more singularity she discovered.

In the parlor—always redolent with the odor of the tobacco smoked there in the evening and on Sundays—the unconscious objects of her condemnatory thoughts were now receiving the rector's expected call. Going about in the room beneath them, she mentally drove them into a hopeless corner, as, with no more reason than she now had, we all can drive our associates when we give rein to uncharitable fancies. When Mr. Follansbee came in she proceeded to explain the case to him.

"You know nothing about it," said he.

In her surprise Mrs. Campbell stopped short. She was not aware that Jack had lately been vigorously cultivating Seth Dayne's friendship, and, besides, using every means in his power to draw Leo into conversation; nor that he had already succeeded, through Seth's favorable opinion, in forming quite a little acquaintance with her, despite her shyness since Mrs. Campbell's tirade.

"Do *you* know anything about it?" Mrs. Campbell at length inquired.

"No—except that it is legitimate enough for a minister to seek out a member of his Sunday-school."

Follansbee did not know that Mrs. Campbell was ignorant of the cause of Leo's late return on Sunday. Since her discovery of the landlady's distrust, Mrs. Dayne had shown her resentment more and more, one of the ways in which she did so being by the maintenance toward Mrs. Campbell of a sad reserve in every respect, especially withholding from her all knowledge of her own and her family's affairs. This she had done not only through her own silence, but, recently, through her enjoinder of a like silence upon her children.

"Did that girl go into that school?" cried Mrs. Campbell. "She's a reg'lar Jeswit. It made me think of a Papist the first time I heard her name. Leo! It has that sound; and"—with a happier inspiration—"I've known dogs to have that name."

"Her name is Leonora."

Mrs. Campbell looked sharply at Jack.

"It's refreshing to hear a girl called anything that doesn't end in *i-e*," he added.

Mrs. Dayne's course with Mrs. Campbell was calculated to incense the latter to the utmost. From time to time she rehearsed her grievances to Mr. Follansbee, always ending by vowing that she would not have "them" in

the house; but temporarily they remained. Henceforth, however, Mrs. Campbell's dignity toward Mrs. Dayne was as great as Mrs. Dayne's toward her.

The mother's determination to settle in Utopia, for the purpose of "living down" the evil reports concerning herself and family, had had the effect upon her sons which she well knew it would have. As a matter of course, they stood by her; for she had more influence with her children than many more tender mothers with theirs. Her strong independence, as, for instance, when she declared that, while she and Leo would stay, Seth and Luke might do as they pleased, seemed to say coolly, "If you can do this, do it! But I shall despise you," and had a power over them greater than that of insistence or persuasion.

She had seldom had occasion to use commands, but when she did her children would as soon have thought of questioning the right of a star to its lofty place as her right to be implicitly obeyed, and would have remonstrated about as successfully with the one as with the other. The insurrectionary tendencies of their childhood having been crushed in the bud, their minds — unless Seth's recent cogitations might be regarded as the embryonic motions of future bold views — had never been awakened to the heretical suspicion that they had any rights inconsistent with their mother's all-affecting supremacy. In this common one-sided notion, that children owe to their parents a debt that nothing can ever pay, they overlooked the fact that parents, just as much, owe to their children a debt that nothing can ever pay — a debt contracted when they took the responsibility of calling them into existence; and Mrs. Dayne, for her part, appeared to be as honest and childlike as her offspring in having no inkling that she demanded, or that they yielded, more than was her due and their duty. Whether this condition of things was ever to be disturbed

remains to be seen. Now, at least, her authority was undisputed.

That authority has done much since its wielder went out of the Church of the Intercessor, leaving Leo behind. Already she has engaged a "tenement" and written to Mr. Small to send the housekeeping goods; so Mrs. Campbell's desire to be quit of her is parallel with her own nearly accomplished purpose.

Meantime Mrs. Dayne's injunction to her children to impart no information had borne hardly on Leo, whom, as being more in Mrs. Campbell's company than the boys, it most touched. Indeed, she was made to feel herself underhanded and guilty by the position in which it placed her.

The landlady's inquisitiveness, excited to its highest pitch by the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the Daynes, caused her fervently to wish to know what they meant to do. Hence she made such observations and expressed such suppositions to Leo that, between the urgent need of saying something and her mother's prohibition, the girl had often been put into burning embarrassment. Sometimes this resulted in her blurting out a partial answer, and sometimes in her keeping a silence which threw her into equal discomfort, inasmuch as she perceived that the silence served as assent which it would have been falsehood to make. And the more she tried to set the thing right before Mrs. Campbell, the worse she made it; for sometimes when one has had the misfortune to give a wrong idea, and tries to reverse it, all his efforts turn traitor and reinforce the lie.

Leo explained to her mother the difficulties into which she was being led, and pleaded to be allowed — under circumstances when even to say nothing was to prevaricate — to disclose something of their matured designs. These it could do no possible harm for Mrs. Campbell to know, and Leo declared that it made her think herself

petty-minded and ungenerous to strain thus to keep secret things which were in their nature no secret. She received, however, the reply that the smallness and contemptibleness were in Mrs. Campbell's prying disposition, not in repulsing it.

Leo made no protest, perhaps not even a mental one, against the maternal decision. She simply yielded to it the unthinking assent of habitual obedience. But her dread of being questioned by Mrs. Campbell caused her to shun the landlady's company as strictly as possible, and when in it to show a reserve which was mistaken for animosity.

Of course she was rendered even more detestable than before to Mrs. Campbell, who decided that the upstart Miss was taking it upon herself to be the pert translator of the family sentiments. In short, the landlady's previous disapprobation of Leo now strengthened into such repugnance that she thought this was really the most intolerably disrespectful and disgusting minx in the world.

Mr. Follansbee was kept informed of all that transpired, Leo's culpable demeanor being reported with a fullness which, it is to be hoped, would have been equaled had the nature of the account been unfavorable to the designs of Mrs. Campbell's awakening rivalry; and when the knowledge finally reached her, through outside sources, of the arrangements that Mrs. Dayne had made, she blamed Leo most of all, and declared to Follansbee, "That girl never speaks a word that's ac'rate. She's used more deception than any born Jeswit I ever saw."

This, as Mrs. Campbell had never beheld one of Loyola's order, was not so strong a statement as it was meant to be; and it appeared to move her hearer about as much as its literal force warranted. Mr. Follansbee now generally made no opposing comment upon her statements, but received them with that quietness which

sometimes indicates a quality of contrary opinion such as renders argumentation useless and silly. Perhaps Mr. Follansbee discredited what he heard of Leo: perhaps, believing, he was indifferent to these revelations, as being little related to his purpose and wholly powerless to deflect it from its steadfast pointing.

At all events, what he thought or schemed respecting her he did not choose to disclose; and no man was better able to keep a prudent secret. He prided himself upon his discretion, especially in maintaining a wise reticence, which had thus far preserved him from incurring open contempt, though, for some cause or other, there prevailed commonly toward him a vague disfavor.

That he was not attended by worldly prosperity, and was made, by his intermittent situation at the New England Machine and his performance of household offices at Mrs. Campbell's, to appear, at least from a distant point of view, as an unmanly and spiritless hanger-on at both places, may, however, have been responsible for this. Mr. Follansbee himself appeared to be ashamed of his life at the boarding-house, and to shrink from being observed in it.

Certainly nothing was chargeable to an unwise giving way, on his part, to the impulse to make disastrous confidences. He never forgot that he who to-day is a supple and manageable friend may by to-morrow be set in rigid and immovable enmity, and hence that whoever reveals what it is essential should not be made public is a fool; and always jeopardizes himself.

Mr. Follansbee took care to give no insight into his private life, except to such as would have even more interest than himself in concealing what they knew. In short, a policy of secrecy had come to influence this young man's every word and act; and to that policy, rather than to an absence of all need of it, he trusted for a safe conduct through the world.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A DISAPPOINTING TAILOR.

THE Daynes now became recognized residents of Utopia, establishing themselves at housekeeping in one of its tenements. "The boys" both responded regularly to the call of the New England Machine; for, as a consequence of Mr. Brackett's well-meant efforts, Luke had been released. He had quietly come back, set his stopped belt going, resumed work, and made no sign. Quietly! He had always been quiet, most of his boyish capers having been plotted by Seth, who, in the early period of his youth, showed much talent for that species of generalship which directs the engagement from a safe distance; but this was a quiet different from the old.

Leo, too, was at work. Although the intention had been to have her studiously disposed daughter's education improved, Mrs. Dayne seemed now to have lost sight of that aim. When Leo, in her enthusiasm to "help," had asked to go to a "place" instead of to school, her mother had said nothing in opposition to the unwise offer. The brothers had strongly objected; but in her relations with her children, Mrs. Dayne was a mixture of peremptoriness and shiftlessness, of energetic supervision and sleepy drifting, her choice of one sort of quality at one time and the other at another being dependent upon — what? Or was there no conscious choice about it?

An oft-reiterated saying of hers was that she would never coercé a child; yet in cases of difference between herself and her children it had invariably transpired that



she had had her way. That the acts of her positive reign were always in the line of what she considered their good, as well as accordant with severe morality, was evident; — but what of her negative superintendence?

At all events, Leo, choking down her disappointment because she was not to go to school,—one was so near that its sounds could be heard from their windows,—had found a “place.” For her to go out in the morning and come back at night was now a matter of course. There was no likelihood that her mother would hereafter become alive to any objection to a perpetual continuance of that round; for it was rather characteristic of Mrs. Dayne not to be much disturbed by what had become an established fact, even though the thing chanced to be what, if her consent had been sought at first, it would have been impossible to induce her to agree to. A large part of her plan appeared to be to resist proposals, without great reference to what they were. To know that to ask her direct concurrence in a project would quite possibly be that which would excite her rigorous hostility to it was to possess a useful item of information in any dealings with her.

Leo’s “place” was very appreciative of her. All the way up the dirty stairs leading to Mr. Chick’s tailor-shop, and indeed all the way to Brackton after parting from her brothers at the New England Machine on the Monday morning when she was to be set to work “on trial,” she had kept saying, “I’ll try hard — hard — hard!” beating the lesson into herself. “I’ll try *so* hard that they *will* keep me.”

The stairs were dirty because Mr. Chick was just now in a quarrel with one of the other tenants, as to how often and by whom the stairs should be swept; but Leo had a tenacity of perseverance such as perfectly to exclude the notion of relinquishment and failure. Therefore, though the displeasing stairs, and the warm, woolly

smell, and the several pairs of eyes that greeted her as she bravely opened the door and stepped in made her faint and sick, she had no thought of turning from her purpose, nor did it occur to her to form the determination of leaving soon — no mean consolation when we find ourselves in disagreeable circumstances.

A workwoman — resident of a one-eyed house standing just where Utopia began to merge into Brackton — now nodded and smiled. It was through her report that it had first come to Leo's ears that there was an opportunity at Mr. Chick's for a girl apprentice. Upon being applied to she had volunteered to tell the tailor of Leo, and had brought word that he would "try" her.

A resolute-looking young female here came to Leo. Her white, regular face was like a wigmaker's wax image, and, like that, was marred with black arched brows. Her lips, when they opened in a laugh, which sounded like a cackle, showed teeth shut so tightly as to make one certain they came together with a snap, like the steel mouth of some human-seeming machine.

This was Miss Piper, the forewoman.

"Take off your things," she directed, "and I will show you where to hang them."

She conducted Leo to a closet and pointed out a hook.

"There! That is yours! You must always hang your things on that hook, and on no other. Nearly all the apprentices Mr. Chick has tried have been very careless. He has been obliged to discharge a great many on account of carelessness. Now it is a rule that every girl shall have a hook of her own and keep on her own hook."

Miss Piper was very emphatic, and conveyed a sense of readiness to bite off, at one nip, the head of any apprentice inclined not to keep on her own hook.

"Yes'm," said Leo solemnly, with an augmented conviction that to be tried by Mr. Chick, and found not wanting, would require all the zealousness of effort which

she had resolved to give. She observed a new sign leaning against the wall, waiting to be hung outside, which bore the glittering words, "Theodore Chick, Tailor," and shuddered as she drearily realized that to "try" apprentices, and even to dismiss them, was a common thing with the terrible Mr. Chick, and not regarded by him as in any way involving matters of life and death.

She began to get a glimpse of the world of business — of the fact that these people looked without any sentiment whatever upon affairs of this kind; that it was so usual a thing for an apprentice to come in on a Monday morning that the circumstance that *she* was coming this morning had scarcely been remembered; that what was so important to her that she had scarcely slept the night before, and, having risen early, could with difficulty restrain her haste to repair to the shop earlier than she had been told to do, was, to the party at the other end of the contract, the merest trifle.

The truth was that Mr. Chick, just entering upon mercantile life, and with no notion of always confining his operations within their present limits, made it a point to employ only the most excellent help. The six or eight girls and elderly women, all of them, however, called "girls," who looked up when Leo came in, had all been figuratively sifted from chaff.

Mr. Chick had undertaken his line heartily. He meant to succeed; and in order to succeed he meant to deserve to succeed. With an eye quite as much to future as to present need, it was his method to be always "trying" a new candidate. Such as showed unmistakable aptitude were retained at a suitable price,—Mr. Chick was no niggard toward first-class talent,—and others were very decidedly not retained.

After the momentary sinking occasioned by a partial perception of Mr. Chick's system, and especially of his vast experience in "trying" seamstresses of every degree,

and of his superhuman acuteness in discovering their inadequacies, Leo's strength began to rise.

"I mustn't expect sympathy. People must get used to indifference. 'Endure hardness like a good soldier,'" she repeated over and over again mentally; for, in straits, familiar scriptures, or fragments that had caught in her mind from the stream of other reading which she had somehow managed to keep running through it, were apt to make themselves useful. "If I can't please Mr. Chick by my work, without his feeling an interest in me, why, it's a sign that the work isn't good; and Mr. Chick'll be perfectly right in not keeping me. I meant to do the very best I could, and I'm going to do that now; but—"

Leo, in her vehement desire to be accepted and her intensified dread of being discharged, wished it were possible to do more. The idea that Mr. Chick and his forewoman had been bent into their present attitude toward apprentices through experience with quite another sort of applicant, as indifferent and inattentive as she was eager and straining, never crossed her mind.

She began work with cold, sweaty hands and some expectation of being instantly set adrift on account of not pulling basting-threads in the manner approved by Mr. Chick. She had rather anticipated being put to making buttonholes, having timorously let the tailor know, through Miss Pratt, the resident of the peculiar house, that she could do that part; but she was to begin at the foot of the ladder.

If the stranger whom we expect proves to correspond tolerably with the mental picture we have drawn of him, we may never know we had drawn any; but when there is consummate disparity between our portrait and the original, the shock of contrast awakens us to see that we had special requirements. That Mr. Chick was anything but a bluff, middle-aged person, with manners sharp and hasty enough to take away one's very breath, especially

that of a dismissed apprentice, it had never entered into Leo's heart to imagine. As she sat, with burning cheeks and clammy hands, picking out bastings with a violent haste that would have been somewhat justified if she had been under sentence of death with pardon depending upon the number she could well and faithfully remove in a given time, she could scarcely believe her senses when, after hearing a brisk step on the stairs which brought her heart into her mouth and Mr. Chick to his own, she beheld a young man like some sturdy, warm-blooded, hearty-breathed ruminant animal,—heard his ringing "Good morning, all!" that had a fresh, out-of-door breeziness about it,—and realized that this was Mr. Chick! Her own blood, which seemed to have stopped in her veins, began to run again.

True, the proprietor had the air of being proprietor; and, too, his nose, when it came to be examined, was rather hooked; but as it was still so young a nose, it had not yet the power to throw over the rest of Mr. Chick's fresh features that owlish and somewhat evil expression for which hooked noses with more years over them are often wholly responsible. His bearing toward all but Miss Piper was merely pleasant, and marked by a certain repressiveness which even Leo's apprehension interpreted not as haughtiness, but only as that degree of rigidity considered necessary to preserve order and prevent the "girls" from taking those liberties, respecting either the quality of their work or the constancy of their application, wherein familiarity with the head might tend to encourage them.

In fact, Mr. Chick was seldom obliged to speak with anybody but Miss Piper. If he had anything to say to the others, especially anything hard or disagreeable, she was his deputy; for Mr. Chick did not like to do those things, and Miss Piper did. If anything was wrong, he set her on, like a ferret, to discover and then to punish,

the only trouble about it being that Miss Piper, once set on, could not be called off at will. With her he consulted and planned. To her he talked with perfect freedom, and with laughter enough to prove that he looked upon her as an incorruptible employee, whose vigilance in his interest no amount of jovial association with himself could relax.

Soon after he came in Mr. Chick noticed Leo's face among the familiar ones, and Miss Piper, who was apparently a great comfort in various respects to her employer, and especially in supplying to him the place of memory, was heard to say, "The girl that Miss Pratt brought, you know"; and Mr. Chick said, "Oh, yes," and proceeded to talk about something else.

At noon, after timidly washing her hands and feeling that she was taking a very great liberty indeed with Mr. Chick's sink, Leo ate a little of her lunch, then sat down again on the box she had been occupying and resumed work. Excitement and anxiety had diminished her appetite.

One or two had gone home to dinner, and the rest, comfortably disposed in couples or trios about the large, whitewashed, new-looking room, were still in the midst of their mid-day respite. Lunches were on their laps, and mugs of hot tea in their hands, which they had drawn from the potfull that Miss Piper always made at noon.

The lull was restful and soothing. The sun, for a winter sun, poured down fervently through the blinking skylight wet with last night's light fall of melting snow. There was a tall cylindrical stove, outwardly as innocent of culinary attachments as a Yankee inventor with a heart deceitful above all things could make it, but with a surreptitious oven somewhere in it, a stealthy perforation for boiling a tea-kettle, and blameless facilities for making coffee and toasting bread. The heat from this

triumphant device of the prince of the powers of darkness curled upward with summery laziness, while from the secret oven issued odors calculated to excite just suspicions concerning the proximity of warm mince-pie. As a substitute for the cheerful noisiness of the sewing-machines, there was the blurred and intermittent murmur of conversation.

Mr. Chick and Miss Piper were eating their dinner after the manner of the others, except that they had a stand between them — a convenient rest for food, cup, or elbow. It was, however, resorted to by all, upon it being set out the universal sugar-bowl, with a pewter spoon, and the universal salt, in a pasteboard box.

Miss Piper poured and handed Mr. Chick's tea, and, while drinking her own, stretched out her nicely booted feet, sounding of new kid, and rested them on a bar within which the protean stove, doubtless stricken with remorse for its concealed iniquities, had penitently imprisoned itself.

A hemispherical fur object, which had been lying under the stove, now elongated itself, pushed out four legs, rose upon them, and, issuing into plain sight, proved to be a cat, at present in the enjoyment of a rounded back and deeply satisfactory yawn, exposing a mouth like a pink cavern, and of a magnitude little to be suspected from outward appearances.

"Here's the Earl," said Mr. Chick.

The Earl, full of vivid anticipations respecting dinner, jumped upon the platform furnished by Miss Piper's extended lap, and settled down, purring insinuatingly, clawing gently, and always keeping a furtive eye on his purveyors.

Mr. Chick bent forward and smoothed the shop pet with his big, warm hand, in a lingeringly affectionate manner which he would have been greatly surprised to know could tinge any mind with the notion that he

patted the Earl because the Earl was so near Miss Piper that he afforded Mr. Chick an opportunity of almost caressing that person herself. We are apt to think our little shams impenetrable, when even the dull eyes of a fool can see through and through them.

"The old fellow likes to be cussed," remarked Mr. Chick.

Although the tailor had been for some time perfectly well aware that he had traveled into the border-land of love, and although he had even thoroughly made up his mind to marry Miss Piper if possible, and although a thousand straws had been proclaiming to every observer which way the wind was blowing, yet he believed that his feelings and intentions toward the forewoman were an inscrutable secret of his own breast. So he continued to stroke the Earl until even that animal suspected that he was being used rather as a cat's-paw than a whole cat—an opinion in which he was confirmed by finding that the circumstance of his possessing digestive mechanism was being ignored.

Miss Piper, who, without any trouble whatever, had long ago read Mr. Chick's inscrutable secret, and who liked to have the Earl fondled by Mr. Chick for the very reason that Mr. Chick liked to fondle him, was about to conciliate his highness with a piece of cheese.

"He doesn't deserve much feeding," said Mr. Chick. "I don't want to cut off his rations; but he's getting careless about the mice."

"I know it," replied Miss Piper, withdrawing the cheese. "I'll starve him to it. There was a mouse in the closet this very morning."

"Well, not starve—exactly—you know. I didn't mean—"

Mr. Chick looked rather weakly and imploringly at Miss Piper for approval of his half-and-half policy toward the Earl.



"What makes that clock tick so low?" asked Miss Piper, looking reprovingly at the timepiece in question.

"I suppose it's out o' breath—needs wind-ing," answered Mr. Chick, endeavoring to avert with a joke the disaster he had brought on the Earl.

Miss Piper said nothing. The cheese, however, was in her box, with the cover snapped down; and when, after dinner, Mr. Chick went out, she gave orders that the Earl was to receive, for the present, no more leavings of lunches.

Whether there was between Mr. Chick and Miss Piper that genuine conjunction of spirit against which no shock can prevail, their circumstances were not adapted to reveal; for those circumstances did not call for an heroic attachment. In their case to make love and marry was not only natural and agreeable, but equally prudent and worldly wise. Mr. Chick needed a wife and a forewoman, and it struck him as a remarkably happy and economical chance that the two could be had in one.

Miss Piper was a very practical and efficient young woman, who had probably never raised doubts in anybody relative to the truth of her frequent assertion that she knew how to take care of herself. She held that women had rights as well as men, and that women ought to draw an especially straight line between their rights and those of men, and then never let so much as a toe be obtruded over that line without resenting the affront. This was the way to prevent trouble. If women acted like idiots, of course men would take advantage of them.

In spite, however, of these rigorous views, Miss Piper had no objection to marriage, provided she could "better" herself by it; and there was no question but it would be a beneficial move for her to become the wife of a rising man like Mr. Chick. She considered that her principles should be carried into wedlock and fixedly adhered to there. Wives should begin as they can hold out.

Mr. Chick, with his roly-poly body and love of fun and fat living, did not look as if he were at all inclined to deprive any one of a reasonable measure of rights, much less an individual whose goodwill was necessary to his comfort or prosperity. Perhaps when his quality came to be tested in the crucible of marriage with pungent Miss Piper, whose black eyes were as ready to emit sparks at a moment's notice as his to narrow with laughter, he would have moments—in fact, he was not quite a stranger to them now—when her temper would grate harshly upon his more lenient one; for instance, by her long-continued severity toward any trivial shortcoming in one of the girls. But then as now he would have the utilitarian wisdom to reflect that, after all, she was really very useful to him, so much so, indeed, that it would be nearly impossible to “run” the shop without her.

In order for any one of the girls to win sharp Miss Piper's unqualified approbation, and be regarded by her as strictly an equal of herself and Mr. Chick, it was necessary that she should be a first-class tailoress, “careless” in nothing. Fewness of interests being favorable to entire consecration, and Miss Piper's faculties not being deprived of the fullest development in the tailoring line by overmuch exercise on other matters, they were so keen where they did operate that it was nearly impossible for any imperfections in the work to escape her notice; and the imperfections that she noticed it took her a great while to forget. Thus any mistake once committed, no matter how innocently nor how scrupulously avoided thereafter, was almost never heard the last of. If the unfortunate girl was ever again engaged upon a similar piece of work, Miss Piper always reminded her of the mistake she had committed before, and cautioned her not to commit it now.

Though all the girls employed by Mr. Chick were

superior seamstresses, it could not but be that some were less painstaking and scrupulous than others. Hence it had come to pass that there was in the shop what might be called a ring. Miss Piper made a difference between the most careful of the girls and those outside of that enviable category, and any shortcomings of the latter appeared to her very dreadfully short. In which class, if either, would Leo find place?

She, sitting on the box, and unconscious of the ring, and of all the invisible enginery that always underlies visible things, began to experience a little of the warmth of jointure with her "place," and to see how it could be pleasant and homelike here after one was used to it.

Miss Pratt, who was one of the old girls, already at the summit of life, and who coiled her thin hair into two very small, flat rosettes, one behind each ear, and who, at the present moment, had a bit of gay worsted in her fingers, noticing that Leo had returned to her task, came and said, "I wouldn't begin till the others do. You'll be tired enough then by the time you get home." Observing that Leo looked at a leaf in her bosom, she said explanatorily, "It's from my double flesh," pointing to a plant near her window, and meaning by her somewhat alarming remark nothing more bloody or physiological than double, flesh-colored geranium. "I'll get you some tea," she continued. "We all contribit for that and the sugar, and everybody's entitled to it."

"I don't care for any this noon, thank you," said Leo; "and I shouldn't want to take it at any time unless I contributed too."

"Well, you can contribit, if that's all," answered Miss Pratt, with a smile. "Nobody'll object to it." She lingered, hesitating. Then, lowering her voice, she said, "I'll tell you that apprentices are not expected to work as you do, and over-hours besides. I've seen more of this place than you have, and I advise you not to do any

more'n you're asked to. If you're goin' on at this rate, you'll be doin' injustice to yourself and more than justice to folks that'll never thank you. Apprentices always go home earlier at night than the rest of us, too."

With these words she returned to her embroidery; for she had finished her light dinner and was filling the remaining moments with some fancy work for herself—a window advertisement of "Rooms." Being compelled, much to her annoyance, to offer for rent a part of her odd house, it had occurred to the faded seamstress to embellish her grief, after the manner of Hester Prynne. She appeared to be afraid that her talk with the new girl would be observed, and left the latter in some doubt as to what motive had prompted her words.

At precisely five o'clock Miss Piper said to Leo, "You can go home. Mr. Chick doesn't oblige apprentices to stay later than this."

"I'd rather stay—I want to learn," answered Leo.

An hour later she was tired enough to be glad to take her things from the hook which had been appointed to them, and, as Miss Pratt was waiting for her, hurry away; but she forgot to ascertain the hook's exact location by counting from the end of the row—thereby laying the foundation for future daily warnings from Miss Piper not to make that blunder the second time.

On their way Miss Pratt spoke again as at noon. "You're very foolish to stay so late," persisted the experienced "girl."

"I really preferred it, so as to progress," said Leo. "Besides, I like to have company; and by coming at this time I can, almost the whole way."

Miss Pratt came nearly as far as the New England Machine.

"Well," was the answer; but it did not sound as if Miss Pratt were convinced that the new girl's preferences

were not unwise guides. Soon she reached her own door, and so said good-night.

Leo presently came into the shadow of the New England Machine. The deserted building, emptied of its workmen, was as cold and dead as a body from which the life-blood has been drained. A watchman's lantern glimmered faintly, as he guarded the giant corpse. As Leo stepped into the shadow of the building she became aware of a figure lurking close to the high fence separating the yard from the street. She and the figure approached.

"Good evening, Miss Dayne."

"Good evening, Mr. Follansbee," said Leo, recognizing him with surprise. Just then the young bookkeeper passed them, said "Halloo" to Mr. Follansbee, and Leo felt that he looked inquisitively back after them. Then, as Mr. Follansbee turned and walked along with her, and as the strangeness of the circumstance that she had met him there and then forced itself upon her, she exclaimed, with her usual unforecasting straightforwardness, "I thought you went home earlier than this!"

"That depends. I have to work late now."

They proceeded in silence, which was a little relieved, part of the way, by the noise of the water pouring over the dam they passed. Finally they turned into the street where both lived. Then Mr. Follansbee, urged by the growing awkwardness of this encounter and a feeling that something must be said by way of excuse or apology before it was terminated, hastily modified the thought that was filling his mind, so as to make it fit to be presented.

"Our paths lie together."

"Yes, they do from the Machine," said artless Leo; "and Miss Pratt's and mine lie together to the Machine."

"Yes,"

There was laughter in Mr. Follansbee's voice that made his companion involuntarily turn in the dark to read his face; and in truth this young man of twenty-eight or thirty was amused, touched, drawn, by the childish transparency of his fifteen-year-old companion. Leo had passed another birthday.

"You will have company, then, all the way. I heard you were at work," in an explanatory tone. "Your brother mentioned it. I'll wait for you evenings; for the most unpleasant part of your walk is between the counting-house and home."

"Oh, I wouldn't for anything have you wait!" cried Leo. "I thought you said you had to stay sometimes. I'm not afraid at all. I told my brothers not to wait. They wanted to; but I'd rather come alone than have tired people do that. Besides, I'm not afraid, really."

"I'm not tired. I—"

"Oh, yes, you must be! You always used to be!" said Leo, getting earnest, and recalling that at Mrs. Campbell's she had often seen Mr. Follansbee quite worn out after a full day at the counting-house. "You are saying that just out of kindness."

"To tell the truth," said Mr. Follansbee, beginning with these words to tell what was not exact truth, "I like to stop awhile after hours. When the office is quiet, I can do a good deal in fifteen minutes; and," he continued, becoming convincing and incontrovertible, "you can see that the writing I get through with at night doesn't have to be done in the morning."

"N-o-o; but—"

"Is your brother Seth in this evening?"

This, considering that Mr. Follansbee knew Leo had not been at home since morning, looked very much as if he was in haste to change the subject and was hard pushed for a way.

"Because I'll run in by and by and see him — if agreeable."

"Oh, yes! Do! I wish you would! He'll be in — he always is, in the evening; and he'll be very glad to see you." Seth had had much to say of late about Jack Follansbee. "Luke is so — sad. Seth can't cheer him up; and we don't have many peo — not much — company."

"Yes, I know," with a kind of brooding sympathy.

They had reached Leo's house, and Mr. Follansbee's hand was on the gate; but he did not open it. Leo felt rather than saw that he leaned eagerly toward her.

"I will be your friend," he said, "the friend of you all, if you will let me be. May I?"

"May you!" exclaimed Leo, now fairly ashamed of having seemed to repel in any degree Mr. Follansbee's generous advances, and perceiving in his manner an allusion to her recent repulse — a thing left unsaid in words being sometimes equally well communicated otherwise. "Why, it's so good of you to be willing to be our friend! I didn't mean, just now, that I wasn't thankful for your friendliness, but only that I didn't want to trouble you. Don't think that I didn't appreciate."

For answer Mr. Follansbee shook her hand, as much as to say, "I'll try not to think so, however hard it may be," and they parted; but Leo felt not a little disturbed lest she had wounded him, and she was made all the more sorry by remembering that he was probably particularly sensitive to any rebuff, on account of knowing himself to be little esteemed. Of course she would wish to be specially tender toward such a one, and she could console herself only by resolving to be very careful hereafter to prove to him his error.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AN AGITATED WOMAN.

WHEN Mr. Follansbee arrived home after parting with Leo he found supper over and Mrs. Campbell wondering what had become of him, though she had not been sufficiently displeased at the hindrance to neglect keeping the biscuits and "a cupper tea" warm, Jack being, as she expressed it, "choice about his victuals."

"Where've you bean?" she asked.

His answer to this and other interrogatives revealed so little that soon she began to think it must really have been something very special that had detained him; and at length, becoming petulant, she vouchsafed the information, of which he had obviously been possessed before, "If you want to make a great secret of it, you can; but something," she added, "has come over you. I've seen it this good while."

Evidently something *had* come over Mr. Follansbee — and something stronger than Mrs. Campbell's influence; for, instead of weakly conciliating her, he showed a totally new indifference. After assisting, as usual, with the dishes, he prepared to go out, although it had begun to storm.

"Ain't you goin' to stay in now you are in?"

"No."

"How long are you go'n' to be gone?"

"I don't know — not long."

"Jack, I want to send an arrant by you!" cried Mrs.



Campbell; but he did not return, perhaps did not understand her, and she heard him go down the steps that were over her head and walk away. Disconsolately dragging a chair in front of the kitchen stove, she sat down, put her feet on the hearth, her hands on her knees, her face in her hands. She sat there long. "What is it?" occasionally inquired the parrot from his cage. "Good-by, good-by!" Mrs. Campbell paid no attention. She was crying.

If Mr. Follansbee expected to see Leo again that evening, he was disappointed. Her severe diligence through the day had left her too fatigued to sit up after supper. Indeed, she would have preferred bed to that meal; but, as the rest had awaited her, she sat down with them, answered favorably their questions as to how she had got on, and lightly set aside their fear that Mr. Chick's would be too hard for her. Then, charging her mother to call her in good season, she went upstairs. Of course she had told Seth that Mr. Follansbee was coming in, and had related the episode of their meeting and walking home together.

"He told me he'd do so every night," she said; "but I don't want him to. I should feel as though he was staying on my account."

Seth asked, "Didn't you tell him we would be glad to wait?"

"Of course; but he said he wanted to get some of his writing done after hours. Still I don't like to have him."

"Don't like to have him get some of his writing done after hours!" Seth banteringly returned, purposely misconstruing her. "Cruel!"

"Oh, I didn't mean that! I meant—I'll tell you. It seemed, all the time, as if he wanted to wait on purpose to be good to us, and just made the writing an excuse.

"I almost know he did!" she added, being suddenly struck with a new and unanswerable argument; "for he said he knew all about—it—the shadow—and that he would be our friend."

"That proves it, little sis!" was the good-naturedly sarcastic reply of the clear-headed mechanic—"sis" being the short for sister sometimes used by him. "That's female reasoning, I suppose! A man says he wants to write fifteen minutes after bell-time and then come home; but the fact that my sister comes home at the same time renders this improbable, while the circumstance that this man is friendly to us proves beyond a doubt that he does not desire to write fifteen minutes after bell-time! You're gen'rally sharper than that, Leo. Go to bed—and get your head—restèd," was the rhymed conclusion of Seth's unusual jocularity.

"The supreme hours unnoted come,  
Unfelt the turning tides of doom."

Seth Dayne regarded his sister as a child still, and no more thought of her awakening an extraordinary interest in a marriageable young man than she herself did. His mind was a plain one, not given to intricate imaginings or suspicions, and so he saw no motive in Follansbee's movements other than the simple one that Follansbee mentioned.

Had Seth realized that his sister had already passed into maidenhood; had the view of life from his standpoint been such as to stimulate defensive caution, by showing him that, in other kingdoms besides the physical, Vigilance, if it have some precious thing that it would save uninjured, can never safely be off guard; in short, had Seth been other than he was, then perhaps— But why conjecture how a different condition of intellect and

experience in him would have affected the future of those inhabiting his little world? As well merge all small speculations in the inclusive assertion that were the whole network of human relations — dependencies, dominations, interactions — different, the world's struggling spirit would be at school to a different system! To know that Seth Dayne's calm gray eyes, clear as his own manly and unsuspecting nature, saw no danger approaching the lamb of his flock is enough for the present purpose.

Mrs. Dayne, as we are aware, allowed some things to go on, when she was in her passive or comatose phase, without thinking much about them; and this matter that Seth and Leo were discussing was probably one of them, as her interest in it was manifested in nothing more than the remark to her daughter, at the end of the tilt, "Seth has the best of you."

So Leo went up to bed, and was soon in a sleep that not even Jack Follansbee's footsteps in the house could disturb — footsteps which, if his word to her an hour ago had any prophetic potency, were destined to sound throughout her years. "Our paths lie together," he had said.

The caller did not tarry long, but two circumstances made his stay enjoyable to the Daynes: the first, that they, finding themselves considerably insulated from their neighbors, and beginning to see that the strait was somehow widening instead of narrowing, that "the shadow" was somehow not passing off, were — all of them except Mrs. Dayne — insensibly coming to regard it as a condescension, and something to be rather grateful for, when they were treated by any one with that unreserved cordiality to which, alas! they were becoming more and more strangers; the second, that Mr. Follansbee himself was far from disagreeable.

His was, to be sure, a negative kind of pleasantness. He was of a somewhat timid presence, had difficulty in looking anybody in the eye, and seemed to have small faith that he possessed any right whatever to a place in this world. He commonly sympathized with other people's decided opinions, though seldom expressing such an opinion himself; and when he did, and found it not approved, he had a way of wording it anew or taking back a part, so as to bring it into quite tolerable accord with his opponent, and this, too, without seeming to have done much more than merely correct carelessness of original expression.

Whether Mr. Follansbee's reason for not giving vent to positive views was that he had none, or whether his mildness of speech was due to some other cause, a more intimate acquaintance with him might show; but in making this visit he had a special end to compass, and in order to compass it he had no need to depart from his usual course.

After the glimpses he had had of Leo's frankness, he saw that she would inevitably report at home his proposition to her. He wanted to forestall the opposition to it which, crediting the Daynes with the same knowledge of the world that he had, he imagined it would raise in her family.

Besides this object, Mr. Follansbee had one other: he desired to come frequently to this house, that he might have the pleasure of seeing Leo more, and might be, so to speak, the first to meet her eyes when they should open fully in the sphere of womanhood, continuing so to fill her sight as to exclude other men from it. Already he had begun to think of her as his. It was, then, on her account solely that he undertook this evening's work; but to reach her he must win the goodwill of the others.

Mr. Follansbee was pre-eminently a manager — so

much so that he thought deep maneuvers were necessary, and put himself to the trouble of scheming, when the circumstances called for no subtlety whatever. Indeed, he naturally summoned strategy to his aid in whatever he did. Consequently when, in the course of conversation, he broached the subject uppermost in his mind, he employed some art.

"I had the misfortune, this evening," he said, "to alarm Miss Leo very much—did she tell you?—by saying that my work would oblige me to be coming home for the present about when she does. I began to think I should really have to put myself out to come at some other time."

Mr. Follansbee was slightly bitter and piqued.

"Oh, no!" they all exclaimed, feeling that Leo must have been very uncivil indeed—she was so haphazard and outspoken.

"She was only afraid of giving you trouble," said Seth.

"Yes, I know she said so, but—" Mr. Follansbee saw fit to remain in painful doubt.

"That *was* it," said Seth, in his grave way, turning on Mr. Follansbee those slow, full eyes of his that had something in their cool, pure shining to put one in mind of winter moonlight, and somehow conveyed an uncomfortable sense of chastity to a conscience not quite certain of itself. "That *was* it."

Mr. Follansbee ran his fingers again and again through the hair upon one side of his head, ruffling it up in a manner that gave it the appearance of bearing no relationship whatever to that upon the other. This continued action, to which he always unconsciously resorted when disquieted, being taken now by the observers of it as an indication that he still felt nettled at Leo's discourtesy and unsatisfied with their explanation, led to the remark from Mrs. Dayne—

"Seth and Leo were speaking about it at supper, and I told them Seth had the best of the argument. He was telling Leo to be sensible and come along when you did."

"Oh!—Yes!—That! That's all right. That's all settled. She decided to," said Mr. Follansbee with haste, and anxiety to repress all further allusion to that part of the subject. He feared that if it were now agitated in the least it would not settle again into so desirable a shape as it had just assumed—would not leave him with the right to escort Leo. "That's all settled," repeated Mr. Follansbee uneasily—powerless, in his apprehension, to do anything to secure the matter from disarrangement except to stamp it all over as "settled." He was, however, in the company of people who had none of the quickness in reading the crabbed, blurred, and zigzag lines of motive and intent that is acquired by those whose various and shifting relations with human kind cause an endless panoramic sheet of this manuscript to pass before them.

The Daynes looked for no mysteries nor machinations. They were simply glad that Mr. Follansbee retained no displeasure; and before he went home they cordially invited him to come often. This was what he wanted.

"I shall be only too glad to come!" he assured them, and added, with a slightly confidential manner, "I suppose you know from experience that my boarding-house is not the most homelike place in the world for a man to spend his evenings in; and as you have broken away from it altogether, perhaps you'll understand my wish to do so sometimes. I hope I shall not wear out my welcome by too frequent calling."

"Don't have the least fear of anything so unlikely!" said Mrs. Dayne.

"You'll always be welcome," said Seth slowly.

"Always," echoed Luke.

After Mr. Follansbee had gone, a little of the warmth and conversational animation which his presence had brought remained. Luke was more cheerful; Seth's seriousness had less than was common to it lately of that quality that made it easily mistaken for sadness or controlled restiveness; and Mrs. Dayne was gratified that Mr. Follansbee was well enough acquainted with Mrs. Campbell not to be influenced by her unfavorable opinion—an opinion which, like most of its holder's thoughts, was made no secret of.

"If Follansbee's eye was straight, I should say he was good-looking," was Mrs. Dayne's comment upon their visitor, as Seth returned from lighting him out. "I do wish, though, we could receive a call without having those people so interested."

This was in allusion to the circumstance that the family occupying other rooms in the same house—for in Utopia there were generally more households than one under a roof—had been noticed from the first to keep a somewhat annoying watch on the movements of the new inmates.

"That woman acts as if we were a menagerie of wild beasts—to be looked at, but from a safe distance; coming out as if by accident, and then dodging in again and shutting the door!"

As Seth had himself observed instances of the conduct his mother described, and had vainly asked her to try what effect a different course from the one of indignation which she had adopted would have upon the woman's prejudices if she had them,—a point upon which Mrs. Dayne entertained no doubts,—he now overlooked the maternal complaint, saying, "I never noticed but Follansbee's eyes were straight enough."

"Oh, no! They —"

"Yes," broke in Luke. "One is crooked, and grows worse, too. It's enough to make anybody's eyes wrong to look at Mr. Hooper so much as he has to. I think it must have been that that made his eyes wrong in the first place."

"They may get turned completely wrong side out then, in the course of time," said Seth, glad to encourage the slightest tendency to humor in the "little fellow," with whom things had gone particularly hard.

"It's sensitiveness about that eye that makes him look away from you, or down, when he talks or is looked at," remarked Mrs. Dayne.

"I've noticed that habit," said Seth, "and if it's really done to hide a defect in his eyes, he's been very successful with me; for I never dreamed there was anything the matter with them."

"Well, I call him good-looking in spite of that," was Mrs. Dayne's final verdict; meaning, of course, in spite of the imperfection, not in spite of Seth's non-discovery of it.

"Well, he's got a clerky look, of course,—a trim look, to what a workingman has," said Seth, with a manifest bias in favor of the workingman. "A fair skin, and small hands, and straw-colored—fuzz, I should call it, for whiskers. But"—and Seth, in deprecation of such triviality, threw back his head with that movement which appeared to be of so great assistance to him in shaking himself clear of what he thought unworthy, and then, as an additional help, managed to twist up a tuft of his top curls into an erect gimlet, as though with the intention of boring his way up from a position morally down-cellar—"looks are nothing. I think he's a good fellow."

"And the reddest lips I ever saw," persisted Luke. "You left that out."

But Seth would not again descend into a vein of con-



versation of which he did not approve, and into which he had before slipped inadvertently.

"Exactly the color of a ripe checkerberry. Wish I had some now!" and Luke sobered at once, this comparison having recalled his country home, for which, owing to his careful silence about it, it was suspected he was secretly longing.

"I should think from your minute knowledge of Mr. Follansbee's features, that you must have been at your old trick of staring," said Seth, who, dreading to see his brother relapse into heaviness, spoke now in the hope of calling his thoughts back from the path they had taken.

When Mrs. Campbell heard Mr. Follansbee coming in, she was still sitting before the fire, but with her head raised and some knitting-work in her hands—a man's stocking. She dropped the work upon the floor, her hands upon her knees, her face upon her hands. As usual, Follansbee came at once to the kitchen. Mrs. Campbell did not stir. He took off his overcoat, went into the entry with it, and returned, shutting the door loudly. Still Mrs. Campbell did not stir.

"Are you sick?"

No answer.

"What's the matter?"

A sob.

Mr. Follansbee maintained a long silence which he showed no intention of breaking by speech, though, by moving about and performing slight offices, he endeavored to intimate to Mrs. Campbell that he was in a state of total indifference to her tears; but if she had had penetration, these very demonstrations would have shown her that he was not unconcerned. Mr. Follansbee, however, abruptly changed his tactics. Stopping in his perambulations, and standing with folded arms, and looking down

sidewise at her, with a determined air tinged also with contempt, he asked, "Has anything happened?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"You know."

"I don't."

"You do."

"Haven't I a right to spend an evening out?"

"You never used to — want to."

"Haven't I a right to?"

"Where've you bean, Jack?"

Mrs. Campbell raised her head and looked full at him, as though inspired with a sudden hope that, after all, his desertion this evening was but a freak for teasing her, and had no such significance as her fears had attributed to it. Mr. Follansbee, wholly unsympathetic toward what was almost tenderness in her, compressed his lips in a way which said that nothing could induce him to answer that question. Mrs. Campbell regarded him earnestly, and, understanding his expression, sunk her head into her hands again.

"Haven't I a right?" persisted Mr. Follansbee. "That point had better be settled once for all between us."

"Then you mean to keep goin'?"

"If I want to."

"You know —"

Silence.

"Well, I know what?"

"Everythin'. That I let you stay here. This is my house. I could send you away — to-night — without any home."

"You dare not — to-night nor any other time."

It appears, then, that Mr. Follansbee, though timid, had when he was roused a certain rigidity and mercilessness in using an advantage!

Now the silence was broken only by tearfulness on the part of Mrs. Campbell.

Jack Follansbee lit his lamp, and, without a word, went up to his room. The fire in the kitchen went out, and it grew cold there, but Mrs. Campbell still sat in the same attitude. The light burned low and finally died altogether, and still Mrs. Campbell sat. At length she crept upstairs in the dark. Jack, still sitting up, heard her.

He, too, had been thinking, but not chiefly of her — no. He had been thinking of the past — his past; and there was enough in it to think of. There were other women in it besides Mrs. Campbell. One woman in particular was in it — his wife.

"No! I have no wife! Never had one!" he said savagely.

That was a long-ago experience, Jack pondered. He had not thought much about it before for a great while: he had buried it so deep, miles deep, when he put her out of his life — the life that she (poor soul — so poor!) had crowded with unbearable wretchedness, and had ruined in hope, in purse, in ambition.

"Thank God!" he said to-night, "there was only one child for me to want and her to keep!"

It had been a boyish alliance; but law, so clumsy, partial, blind, in his case, that he had borne both it and the marriage relation bitter grudge from that dark time to this, had refused to sever it, and left him a drained, disgusted man, with a sense of irreparable wrong.

Then it was that he lost faith in justice, then it was that he snapped his desperate fingers in the face of courts and decrees, and, swearing that he would be free as air, and because he had been given no love would possess himself of many loves, took silent leave of the places that had known him, and, wandering far, half a vagabond and often in need, but determined never to be found, and

with a smarting, deceived, resentful, resistant, hungry heart still burning in his desolated bosom, had at length strayed into Utopia, and had clung there—to be sure, rather shiftlessly and not quite like a whole man—ever since. But Jack was so tired, and so despondent of the future, that he did not care much to be a whole man. He never had been able to get the upper hand of fate since it gave him such rude handling so early in youth: why not shuffle through to the end? What was there worth rising up and striving for?

Yet Jack did strive for some things, was determined about some things; for it was then—when he got the rude handling—that he began to defy Authority in every form, to question the right of all established institutions to be respected. It was then that his mind awoke to study things as they were,—so he said,—biased by no teachings or preconceptions. It was then that all the landmarks of his childhood were swept away and he commenced to build from new foundations both his social and religious creed, and to struggle to carry out into practice, without being discovered, some of his most unpopular sentiments.

So Jack had not been thinking this evening of Mrs. Campbell, though he knew she was unhappy, and though he would have preferred to have this otherwise. He bore her no grudge. The time had been when he felt some affection for this woman; but nowadays Jack Follansbee's affection for women was rotary; and in the course of its revolution, Mrs. Campbell was passing backward into the chill and shadow proportionately as there was dawn and brightening in some other quarter.

One of the ideas of Mr. Follansbee's defiant freedom was that people should attach themselves to those who allured them most, and that any other course was resistance to nature's directions. He believed that mutual

attraction was the only valid wedlock, and hence that permanent ties, to which, if he had a thousand lives to live, he never — never — would submit again, were the greatest of all evils.

This view, and similar ones, were very firmly and sincerely held, and consistently acted upon, by this man. His present conduct, then, which struck Mrs. Campbell as desertion and agitated her supremely, was, according to his estimate, nothing dishonorable; for let it not be imagined that Jack Follansbee held himself amenable to no moral standard. He did; but he lacked the courage to declare and explain himself, to stand forth for what he was, to let his opinions be known,—a courage grand in proportion as its exercise will subject one to contempt, or ridicule, or persecution,—a courage which, however loathsome, erring, silly, may appear the theory it champions, commands the applause of every just mind.

He had as much resoluteness as has carried some to martyrdom for a cause, but it was directed, not openly against the powers that be, but to stealthily thwarting those powers in his own case. He was set on living in resistance to what he considered unenlightened human law, and on evading, for himself and his associates, every form of punishment provided for such deportment.

The effect of this policy was seen in the skulking timidity of his manner, increased by his concealment of his past life and experiences. His mind was never free and clear from an oppressive sense of secrecy, the need of being guarded. Verily, extremes met in this character — daring in thought, but cowardly in speech; unswervingly true in acting his convictions, but unswervingly false in disguising his actions.

He may at some time have been pricked by the recurrent thought that, since he had these principles, his habit of hiding them was not the noblest course, and another

way may ever and anon have opened obtrusively before his mental sight; but certainly now he was confirmed in his choice of the path in which he was walking, the other not having presented to his view beauty enough to induce him to enter it and be ground between the upper and nether millstones of public disapprobation. Moreover,—for our motives are seldom single,—he had thought of what an avowal from him would imply against some involved with him.

Such was the man,—independent, cowardly; fine, mean,—filling, with revengeful avidity, his charred heart with fresh loves,—a heart which nevertheless remained as empty, even while it held them, as a nest made for a singing bird when filled with snow heaped in it by the winter hurricane. Such was the man who this evening said to Leo, “Our paths lie together.”

## CHAPTER XV.

### A SCHEME FOR SAVING.

IF one wish to find the best proof that the heart of man is a fathomless mystery, let him study that heart not on the side from which it acts upon others, but rather in that phase of its power which enables it effectually to impose upon itself—to act the part of the seamstress who could hide her own thimble and verily believe she could not sew.

When we ardently desire to do a thing, without being at all certain that we ought to do it, it frequently happens that, in the strife of voices which takes place within us, we hear some exceedingly fine and convincing reasons given why we should favor our inclination.

As time went on and Mrs. Campbell gained a fuller and fuller knowledge of Mr. Follansbee's increasing indifference to herself, and realized more and more sensibly how impotent were all her efforts—whether in the line of soft sentiments or of devotion to his personal comfort in matters of food and raiment—to recall him as he submitted himself to the current and floated irrecoverably away; as she perceived, too, how true were his words that she dare not give herself the satisfaction of dismissing him from her house, because her reputation lay like a feather before John Follansbee's mouth, absolutely at the mercy of a breath; as she saw how entirely the advantage was with him, how helpless she was to disturb his exasperating security, and how hopeless it was to try

to escape from the tight grip of his ascendancy, she became not only as unhappy as she could be consistently with having a really strong back and being unconscious of stomacic operations, but she began to dislike Mr. Follansbee very much, and to get quite a new insight into his character.

Now, for the first time, it occurred to her that he was dangerous to the community, and that she had a duty to perform — especially to the Daynes, that they might put an immediate stop to his associating with Leo. Not that Leo was so spotless — Mrs. Campbell did not intend to imply that, but only that she was not so bad but that she could be worse, or at least worse off.

It would be necessary only for Mrs. Campbell to tell something of what Mr. Follansbee thought on certain subjects. Nearness to never so uncommunicative a person *will* reveal much of his mental life; and she knew enough of his to equip her for her worthy undertaking. Of course he would be very angry, she was aware, if her words ever came to his ears; but they might never come to them, and at any rate the move, when he found himself cut off from Leo, would cause him to return to herself; and if it caused him to suffer coldness from others besides the Daynes, it would be a proper punishment.

Such thoughts were the groping roots to whose presence and nature Mrs. Campbell's future actions above ground testified; but as she and Mrs. Dayne had now reached that very lofty state of mutual contempt which is observed to affect the vision so that one cannot at all perceive his enemy, it was impossible for her to speak directly to the mother, and so accomplish at once her most important end and the one she could least afford to subject to delay — the removal of her rival beyond Jack's reach. There was, however, another means that she could try.



Meantime Mr. Follansbee regularly waited, at evening, for Leo. If dropped from work at mid-day, he always got back to his post on the sidewalk at night. Sometimes, latterly, instead of loitering back and forth in the shadow till she came, he had walked out toward Brackton to meet her. Very carefully respectful had been his treatment of her; for, whatever Jack planned, he was not the man to risk his good name, as he called it, together with Leo's company and acquaintance altogether,—thus having all his purposes frustrated at once,—by alarming "that infant," as, with a new, foolish tenderness beginning unconsciously to spring in his woman-surfeited heart, he mentally characterized her. That he had a good name he did not doubt, for he had come to regard his reputation as excellent enough if only no mutterers could point to positive proof against him. Moreover, before he could venture even an attempt to imbue Leo's mind with his peculiar principles, he must wait for her to outgrow the childishness of reporting at home whatever befell her. This interim was not proving to be by any means a dreary and unenjoyable season to Jack.

Leo had flashing out of her, like the intermittent light of the firefly, ingenuous revelations of her unsuspecting guilelessness, and of her clear confidence in himself, very fascinating to a sophisticated man like Follansbee. He found the very transparency which he deprecated, and which he wanted to see supplanted by opaqueness, profoundly entertaining. In his evening walks he fell into the habit of talking for the mere sake of drawing her out in that improvident sincerity, those amusing disclosures of her inexperience, and of the plain and blunt, because unforecasting, honesty of her mind, which glinted more or less frequently in her conversation.

Unlike Mr. Follansbee, Leo, when she was interested

and led on, talked freely, as innocent people can afford to do. She had as yet not much idea that this world was a place where it was not always best to let all that is in us be known. Once Mr. Follansbee had been so much diverted that his mirth had shown itself sufficiently in his speech to make her turn and inquire, with the noticeable intonation which was sometimes hers, "Are you laughing?"

Whenever Jack heard that peculiar thrill in Leo's voice—and, as she was in the habit of being very much in earnest about small matters as well as large, this had happened more than once—it reminded him of something he had read about a pipe so blown that the player's very soul seemed beaten upward on his breath, through the instrument's silver throat.

"No, I'm not laughing," he replied on this occasion, straightening his face. "Why?"

"I thought your voice smiled," Leo answered carelessly, being too incognizant of any good reason why Mr. Follansbee should laugh to question his veracity—a state of hers that so enhanced his enjoyment that she, learning daily to know that her appearance, if not her speech, frequently excited ridicule, and shrinking from it as though it were a lash, cried, "What have I said? I feel that something's laughing. If it isn't your face, it must be your mind."

"Can anybody read what's in another's mind?" asked Mr. Follansbee, really forgetting his merriment in his anxiety to dissipate Leo's suspicion that she was affording sport, and thus to preserve unembarrassed what he called her "originality." In Mr. Follansbee's apparently deep interest in the subject introduced by his question, and in the discussion of it which he excited, her momentary mistrust was lost.

This time he had easily succeeded in saving her per-

fection of unrestraint, menaced by his own carelessness. Soon, however, he found before him the harder task of restoring her faith in himself after it had been seriously and of purpose damaged by another.

One evening, some time after Mrs. Campbell's discovery of an indirect means of bringing about a disruption of the fast-progressing acquaintance between Leo and Follansbee, the latter had long to pace to and fro in the shadow of the New England Machine. His charge did not come. He grew uneasy. Walking down toward a street lamp, he examined his watch, and hastened, in real alarm, out upon the road over which Leo was so late in coming.

It chanced that he met no one until he came near Miss Pratt's house. Suddenly he heard voices. At her gate stood Miss Pratt, and, with her, Leo. Instead of going forward and expressing his concern for the latter, his timidity or indecision asserted itself. Stealthily — on tip-toe — he receded unobserved. Presently the two women separated, and Leo started, almost running, toward home, but not until Follansbee had heard Miss Pratt say, "Remember it was my Christian duty to tell you. Now keep away from him; for he's never been well thought of, and this'll get all round, now she's let it out. Everybody'll hear it, sooner or later."

In a strange voice Leo replied, "I know 'twas your duty. I don't blame you."

"Miss Dayne! Here I am! I came out to find you!"

Leo stopped, and Follansbee overtook her. She fairly bristled. A pang shot through the man as he perceived the change. "I'm sorry you have been put to so much trouble and delay on my account," she said distantly, and with that stiffness and frigidity which Righteousness of maturer age has been known to infuse into its manner toward Sin.

Leo was young, and a good way from being perfect. In religion she was thoroughly intolerant; and she had heard, among other things, that Mr. Follansbee was an "infidel"—synonym for whatever was profane, impious, irreverent, blasphemous. She herself was not only not an "infidel"—she was at present at the other extreme.

A consistent and unflinching exponent of the spirit of the teachings brought to her by a system holding itself to be, if not the only, certainly the specially divine one, she showed now, under the first real test to which her doctrinal charitableness had ever been put, her intense bigotry.

Leo instantly felt that she owed it to God to reprove unbelief. She could not permit herself to be the same to Mr. Follansbee now. It would be like approving of him and turning away from God—winking at the insults of God's enemies. It was a duty to make a difference between God's friends and God's foes—to show the latter that, for your part, you were unequivocally on God's side. You must not good-naturedly let it appear doubtful where you stand.

As she hurried along, giving the "infidel" hard work to keep up to her pace, her mind was full of these thoughts. She knew not what kind of people she had fallen among here in Utopia, but of God she was sure. He was loyal, and she would be loyal to Him. The stars overhead were His; and it seemed to bring her closer to Him to look up to them and cling to their eternal steadfastness. He would save to the uttermost them that put their trust in Him, but as for the ungodly, He beholdeth them afar off.

- "What is the matter with you, Miss Dayne?"

"I want to get home. Mother'll be worried."

"That isn't all?"

"No. I promised not to tell."

"It is something about me."

"I will not tell."

"Well, you need not; for I overheard it all."

Leo stopped short.

"I heard it all—or nearly all. I walked out to meet you, and, finding you with Miss Pratt, I fell back a little to wait, and heard—enough. Well," with a long breath, "you are like the rest—believe a lie, and condemn a man unheard."

"Is it a lie?"

"Certainly it is."

"And do you believe in the Savior?"

"As a matter of course."

"And in being married?"

"No one more."

This conversation went on until Follansbee knew a good deal. He had made a bold stroke, and a successful one; for, besides opening to him all of Mrs. Campbell's maneuvering, it gave him an opportunity to strengthen, possibly so that future disturbances could not shake it, Leo's confidence in himself: first, by positive denial, once for all, of the accusations against himself—for Leo could not dream that he was directly and systematically lying; second, by showing her that Mrs. Campbell had an object in thus slandering him, now or in future,—that object being the deflecting of his friendship from a family she detested; and, third, by creating in Leo the feeling that she had done him a great wrong by harboring the falsehoods of an enemy when all his treatment of her and hers had been such as should have made her slow to give them a reception. This last purpose he could easily accomplish.

"I," said he sadly, "have always tried to do by others as I would have them do by me; but—there are some who have always disliked me. Now, have I ever, in any

way, given you reason to believe these vile stories you have heard to-night?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" said Leo fervently. "Forgive me, and I will never be so hasty again. Do forgive me!"

Mr. Follansbee, apparently in no hurry to forgive, continued: "You acknowledge, then, that it was unjust for you to take it for granted that they were true? In view of my blamelessness so far as you know, and in view of the fact that Mrs. Campbell's words are explainable on the ground of her hostility to you and yours, you admit that it's nothing more than right that you should, in the future, when you hear anything of the same kind, disbelieve it until you see it confirmed by something in my words or deeds? I thought I had done enough already—thought you all knew me well enough, by this time, not to be so easily upset; but—" Follansbee paused, the more effectively to convey the idea that he was disappointed.

Leo easily took this allusion to his befriending of the family, and exclaimed, "Oh, yes, we do know you, and I will disbelieve! I've done nothing, from the beginning, but hurt you, our very first and best friend here."

"Well, I think I have been a friend to you," admitted Mr. Follansbee candidly, "and that I have deserved better things of you than this. I can't get over it—I can't—how quickly you turned against me; and I think, too (excuse me for saying it), that you—your family—ought to have found out before this that not everything reported in this place, about people, is true."

"Oh, we have! And I'm ashamed clear through because I was so ungrateful to you, so ready to believe harm. But those things are dreadful. If they had been true—if you were an infidel, and didn't believe in being married—I could not feel the same toward you, could I?"

"Certainly not. Then you believe in being married?"

Mr. Follansbee, in spite of a disturbed mind, found himself smiling and falling into his old habit of drawing Leo out.

"Oh, yes; and forever, too. I shouldn't want to love anybody a little while, and then somebody else a little while. I should love him every minute as long as I lived, you know! I shouldn't be satisfied to love him any less than that."

Somehow it gave Jack Follansbee, who did not believe in the permanence of love, a strange loneliness and sense of destitution to perceive that Leo was old enough to speak such words, and yet plainly did not connect him in the slightest measure with them. The unembarrassment of girlish friendship, without the least tinge of love, marked her air.

He, however, overcame somewhat his heaviness of heart by thinking that probably she was only echoing what she had listened to from infancy up, not giving utterance to thoughts created by an inclination to love in herself, and that he stood at present a better chance than any one else of winning to himself that affection which she declared, with all the strength of youthful positiveness, would endure "forever." Jack was beginning ardently to covet that affection. "She does not care for me now," he thought, "and I must be cautious not to let her know that I care for her — until she has grown to care for me. I will wait."

"Are there any people who believe all those things I was told about you?" asked Leo suddenly.

"There is every sort of belief, I suppose, taking the world together."

"I was wondering how Mrs. Campbell could have thought of so much herself alone."

"To tell the truth," said Mr. Follansbee, who, when

he used this preface, generally told less or more than the truth, "Mrs. Campbell has a little, a very little, ground for her statements. I had about the house at one time some literatooor — not mine, though; some that was lent to me — which discussed certain matters of that sort. To tell the truth, I thought that several of the arguments used were very good ones; for there are always two sides to everything, you know. I may have been heard to say as much; but I never took any pains to explain myself exactly. However, I soon got disgusted, and saw that that kind of thing would be hurtful to society."

"I see," said Leo heartily; "and whatever the folks at home say, I will not turn against you. And when I tell them all —" She paused, for it struck her that it might be necessary now, in justice to him, to disclose what she had all along kept secret: namely, Mrs. Campbell's charging her, on the day when she gave her packed-up coins to the old woman, with putting herself in Follansbee's way, thus showing that his landlady had even then begun a course to separate them, of which this new demonstration appeared to be only the natural continuation. "When I tell them all, I think they will not distrust you. But if mother should forbid —" Leo was distressed, yet she must prepare Jack to expect anything from her mother.

He relieved her by bitterly taking up the sentence:

"If your mother should forbid you to come with me any more, because people are talking about me, then — what?"

"Oh, she can't do that!" said Leo; "though that was what I was thinking. She'll remember how *we've* suffered unjustly, as you're suffering now, and what a friend you've been to us! If she should forbid, though, of course I couldn't come."

"No," said Follansbee, with a show of loud respect



for parental commands, "of course not,"—though he inwardly cursed the fate that time after time threatened to put Leo entirely out of his reach. And most of all he cursed Mrs. Campbell.

"But even that wouldn't make me disbelieve in you," resumed Leo. "Don't think it, ever. And I'll always be your friend, and I'll come, just as I do now, *if I can*. And I'll always let everybody know that I'm your friend; for I understand, now, how this all came about—how it started in the first place—better than anybody else; better than even you do."

She was thinking again of the day when Mrs. Campbell attacked her, and that poor Jack was really being wronged through her—that is, through the jealousy which she had had the misfortune to arouse in Mrs. Campbell.

"Then, Miss Leo, you promise me that, whatever may be said of me hereafter,—for if I have such enemies as these reports show that I have, there's no knowing what will be said,—you will stand by me until you yourself see something wrong in me? And I promise you that I will be willing you should not stand by me when you do see anything wrong."

This last was now true! If Jack Follansbee's intention had previously included any harm to Leo, he perceived that his game was up. Nothing but the most exact propriety of speech and action could henceforth suffice to keep her near him. It had come to pass, in this instance, that the smallness of gossip and the meanness of detraction had worked a good—that Mrs. Campbell's generous and disinterested scheme for saving Leo had really saved her, forever, from any evil plot in Jack Follansbee.

"I promise," said Leo. "Will you forgive me the wrong I did you?"

"It hurts me still. Yes, I will forgive you."

They had been hurrying along the while, and when they reached Leo's home Seth was just coming out, ready to go in search of her.

It was so heavy and angry a step that Mrs. Campbell heard entering her house a moment later that, listening, she said to herself, "That can't be Jack!" But it was. The word which she imagined would quietly and secretly accomplish its errand, and only after a long time, if ever, come to the ear of him whom it most concerned, had not returned unto her void.

John Follansbee's rage increased as he neared the cause of it. It leaped in him like some demon aside from himself. Well might Mrs. Campbell's heart stand still in this presence. Well might she pale as she watched the contortions of the white face of this passionate man, whom she thought she knew, but never had known till now.

He struggled with the throes of the vehement devil in him — wavering forward toward Mrs. Campbell — lifting his hand — receding. Speech seemed to be denied him. Fierce spasms of effort twisted his mouth. Through shut teeth, in a low, grinding whisper, and slowly, as though every word fought its way out of dusty suffocation, he ejaculated, "Curse — you! If — you — were — a — man — I — would —"

He choked again with overmastering wrath, turned like a flash, and went violently from the room.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A GREAT DECISION.

THE next evening, Jack, doubtful as to what effect Leo's report would have upon her guardians, questioned whether he would better, by waiting for her as usual, run the risk of appearing to persist brazenly in putting himself into her company, or modestly retire from the field until he received some sign.

Should he pursue the latter course, he would be showing a becoming appreciation of the fact that they might now consider his escort anything but a favor to her or a benefit to her womanly standing. It would show also a quick readiness to sacrifice himself for her good — *sacrifice* himself, because, should he abandon his habit of walking home with her, it would be believed not that he had voluntarily withdrawn, but that he had been dismissed. That habit, he knew, had been observed and commented upon, he having been recently much bantered about it by certain of his male friends.

When the bell struck at night and it was time to go home, Jack was still miserably pondering on these things,—and on one other very special thing,—as indeed he had been all day while bending over his accounts with his back to the snobbish head bookkeeper and the polished machines.

Fortunately there was no hurry that day. The silent clerk, with his elbow on his desk and his head lopping dejectedly on his hand, had made more idle pencil-marks and stabs of a penknife than he had figures and entries.

When asked what was the trouble, he had replied fretfully that he had not slept well — the fact being that he had not slept at all.

This had been the first day in Jack's life when he had knowingly been under definite accusations. Whenever the door had opened, he had started as though expecting arrest. Whereas yesterday he had regarded himself as a good and orderly member of society, to-day he felt something positively like the pains of an upbraiding conscience, the sickness of a repentant heart. While striving to appear indifferent, he had tried to read in the faces of his acquaintances whether the damaging rumors concerning himself had yet reached them; and even where no coldness existed, he had tortured himself by imagining that he discovered it.

The recital of the statements made against him which he had managed to get from Leo was necessarily imperfect, because he had been obliged to act in harmony with his declaration that he had overheard nearly all. As night had worn away and he had vainly tested devices for falling asleep, he had wished that his inquiries had been more particular. He had reviewed his past from the time when its harassed era began, and where, before, it had seemed so safe, so closed to detection, there yawned now in his sight many a gap through which, his fears told him, might be espied confirmation of this hearsay. People would begin now to "put this and that together."

As we have already seen, Jack cared tenderly for his reputation, such as it was. Now he fancied himself already the subject of everybody's thoughts and words; for we are inclined to give our neighbors credit for having something of the same breathless interest in us that we have in ourselves. In one sense a complete slave to public opinion, Jack shrank and cowered in wretchedness before approaching punishment.

How fervently he wished he had never become thus involved! If only—only—he were again free from this trouble! How happy he was before it came! How easily he could have escaped positive exposure if, here and there, at points where now he could so clearly see what he ought to have done, he had behaved more circumspectly! Still, he was not to blame, after all, he said, if you came to that. The state of society was to blame, which made wariness in such a course as his necessary, and condemnation possible.

Yet he was fain to admit that the way which he had been so determined to follow, and had succeeded in following, had yielded him but small satisfaction. His past had been anxious, and, in spite of his care, vaguely harmful, and now had risen behind him to scourge his back with fury. But he could not change anything of all that now. He must simply save himself, as far as might be, from its consequences.

The bell had struck. Mechanically Jack prepared to go out. The head bookkeeper had been gone an hour, and Jack was alone in the office. Standing under the gaslight, before the glass, he adjusted his tie carefully,—being scrupulous in dress, even if his garments were sometimes a little threadbare and rusty,—buttoned his great-coat across his breast, and slowly, very slowly, drew on his gloves, abstractedly fastening each with great nicety. Should he go home—or wait?

Striking the odd attitude which Leo had often seen him take, and concerning which she had tried to decide whether it was really womanish or only peculiar,—one foot advanced, his hands crossed, one clasping the opposite wrist,—he stood thinking. His face, wan from lack of rest, from the exhaustion following his spent wrath, and from anxiety as to the future, was bent down, and looked, in the shade of the gracefully rolled brim of his

soft black hat, fine and almost noble. Was there, though, a least tinge of rakishness coming in Jack Follansbee's mien?

Should he go home—or wait? If he stayed, should he be confronted by Seth Dayne, and suffer the mortification of being deprived of Leo's company after he had shown unmistakably his desire for it? On the other hand, would not his non-appearance be interpreted as a late admission of guilt, and an evidence of shame on his part?

Moreover, he could not give up Leo's company! His love for her—yes, Jack was beginning to know it was love! How different from that which he had called by the same name before!—his love for her faced him at every turn of his thought. No, he could not and would not relinquish her company. By fair means or by foul, by winning over her family or by influencing her in opposition to them, he would have it.

But time was passing, and he must decide upon his course for to-night, and that quickly. It would soon be too late to see Leo, and if he allowed her—probably with her brother—to pass, it would be still harder to face them hereafter. Between his inclination and the checks to it, Follansbee was tossed doubtfully. Still half undecided, but impelled by a sense of the necessity of taking some step, he put out the lights, and, locking the door behind him, went cautiously toward the gate, as if fearing to make any noise lest a heavy staying hand be laid upon him. Relieved by the out-door air, he drew a deep breath, straightening himself and squaring and shrugging his shoulders, as though to shake off the incubus upon him.

Hiding now in the shadow of the tall gate-post, — for even when there was no visible reason for it, Follansbee showed a preference for shrinking into concealment,—

and hearing no sound of any one stirring, he ventured to thrust his head out and look up and down the street. Nobody was in sight. Utopia was at supper. It was not yet quite time for Leo. Jack concluded to wait. Screened as he was, he could watch what took place, and if she came accompanied by Seth, Jack could, if he chose, let them go by without making his presence known.

Standing there, Jack wondered what the next few moments would bring forth. When he turned away from that spot, would it be with the right to continue his charge over Leo, or would it be with a desolate consciousness that she was gone from him, and that only by effort and intrigue and weary managing, if at all, could he hope to regain even that degree of intimacy which he had lost? Worn out in heart, mind, and body, he felt himself, at this moment, unequal to the task that loomed before him in view of the latter supposition.

Busy, very busy, were the man's vexed thoughts as he stood there. Many matters momentous to his troubled soul were before him for settlement, notably the one special matter which, with the others, he had been pondering all day. The new position in which he found himself placed by Mrs. Campbell's action—a position less unpleasant and injurious in the Utopian eye than his imaginative timidity pictured it—was forcing a crisis into his life; and he was aware of this.

Since morning, arguments and objections relative to the one special matter engrossing him had been fighting over and over again in his mind the same quick, fierce battle. He had found difficulty in deciding—his long-standing difficulty; but he must, by deliberately and finally choosing between two paths which he saw open to him, put a stop to the strife that was tearing him.

He could bear it no longer. With a desperate move-

ment, as though he found himself unable, after all, to make a choice, he took from his pocket a coin, the act suggesting that possibly he was accustomed to make "heads" or "tails" supply to him the place of decision. But with a gesture of disgust, as though disclaiming his own weakness, he put it away.

"I will marry her," he muttered between his teeth, "and begin over again."

Mrs. Campbell had hoped that if her partial exposure of Jack should ever come to exert a power over him, it would restore and bind him to herself. Behold, with more speed than she had reckoned upon it had come to exert a power over him, and had moved him to more than readiness to marry — her rival! For, in truth, Jack Follansbee, exhausted with a night and a day of contending anger, love, fear, now thought of marriage with Leo as of a blessed refuge from all the dangers and worrisomeness besetting his unapproved mode of life, as well as a means whereby he could regain his standing, — a home-haven, at last, where he should be content to rest, abandoning social piracy and peril for the safe and sober happiness of possessing a true wife and unshamed children. He had committed so much piracy and had suffered so much peril! Besides, he was getting old enough to begin to feel weary of standing out against society's dicta.

Not that Jack was thus renouncing his opinions themselves. Very false to the fact would it be to represent this. Men's convictions are not so easily changed. Even now he thought with pleasure that it would be an insult to the law to do this thing; for was he not still bound, in a manner, to that other woman, and without a right to espouse this one? Only nobody must know it.

This new turn of the machinery of circumstance, which had stirred Leo by a little from her nearness to



him, had shown him that his affections were woven close about her. He could not have her wrenched away from him; and sooner or later she would be, unless he married her. Mrs. Campbell's trick, then, had left him little choice.

Jack had still another reason to make him less particular now to model his life after his private views. He knew perfectly that his present association with Leo would compromise her — nay, that it had already done so in the esteem of some. Indeed, he himself had more than once had occasion to resent coarsely jocular insinuations from certain companions of his, as well as from the head bookkeeper. The lowness of mind and coarseness of speech of these mates of his had ever jarred upon him, and now that Leo was the one whom their vulgar banterings involved, they produced in him a displeasure and repugnance which he could not conceal, and which had caused him to show a stern irresponsiveness, and to make annoyed avowals of her innocence which served merely to excite incredulous smiles, and so to provoke in him a still deeper disgust.

These men were brutal, he had said in his vexation; but they chanced to know too much of his outer life, and to be too incapable of appreciating that in his inner life which made him eternally at variance with their indelicacy of thought and word, to see in him anything different from themselves. In their opinion, no woman with whom he associated would be likely to remain spotless.

He must, then, while abhorring their impurity of spirit and offensive familiarity, and while angrily galled by their having the advantage of him, submit to have them slap him on the shoulder as a hale fellow well met. But Leo! How the vision of her stood out before him in snowy contrast to these skeptics in love and virtue, at

the mercy of whose ribald flippancy his attentions had placed her! The pathos of the picture touched him. What tenderness he felt for her as she stood thus in his thought, exposed by him to the taunts of these men! But he would make reparation by and by. He would marry her. He said it, hiding in the shadow of the tall gate-post.

No sooner had he said it, however, than again the omnipotence of his wavering habit was manifest. Instead of being able to rest in the settlement he had made, he began once more to weigh the pros and cons precisely as before, and, hugging delay and snatching back to himself the right of further consideration, quickly added qualifications which, after all, made his future course to depend upon a contingency.

"If she comes to-night—and speaks to me—I will marry her—if I can," was poor Jack's final rendering of his purpose.

Just at this moment he discovered Leo coming slowly and hesitatingly toward him—but not from the expected direction. As she neared the gate she stopped altogether, shrinking close to the fence, and looked anxiously through its high pickets.

In the quiet the engine could be heard breathing like a sleepy giant. Jack's pulse stood still. Was Leo waiting—looking—for him? Oh, the blessedness of the thought! His blood tingled now, his happy bosom swelled. All was changed. His impulse was to stride out and clasp her in his arms, such a revulsion of feeling the sight of her under these circumstances brought. How light his mind in a moment! How life lit up before him! There was a chance for him yet—even for him—in this hard world! How it warmed his heart and set it to singing!

"Leo!" he said, going toward her. "Is that you?"

"Oh, yes!" she cried joyfully; "I made haste to-night, I was in such a hurry to tell you it was all right at home. I thought you'd be anxious. They understood it! They don't believe it, and I don't," she went on enthusiastically. "We should be mean, Seth and mother said, to turn against such a friend as soon as he had trouble."

Circumstances were closing about Leo as though she were the center around which revolved a plot, and, out of many mixed influences, her fate appeared to be passing into the hands of such as Jack Follansbee, Mrs. Campbell, and Mr. King.

But how Jack loved her now! He found it hard work not to clasp her in his arms. No wavering any longer about his purpose toward her! Now that destiny had decided, he welcomed its decision. He *would* marry her, if worthy effort and persistence could win her. He felt new strength — new courage — more a man than he had for many a year. For once, things had gone in his favor of their own accord.

A new life, cut clear from the old hangdog practices, seemed to open before him, and in resolving to enter it he felt as free as if he were already there. He would leave Mrs. Campbell's,—at present he loathed her fat person and not overnice finger-nails,—and would pay his way like other men. Such was Jack's desire now; and an honest aspiration is a sacred thing, an honest effort a more sacred one. He could do all things, now, for Leo's sake. He would conquer. Fresh health ran in all his veins. He wondered that he only said, "How did you happen to be going the wrong way?"

"Oh, I suppose I got here too early; and I went by. Then I was so sorry not to see you that I came back to look."

"I think you had good courage. When I first heard your name, I used to wonder about it, and think, 'Leo

means lion,'—I used to study Latin a little. It must be the right name for you."

"Oh, there was no fear! When I was thinking about coming back, I happened to glance up at the side of the Machine, and the snow is blown on to it, and frozen, in the shape of a hand with the forefinger pointing this way. I took it for a sign and came back. I'm glad now I did; for you must feel better, and so do I."

Somehow this threw a slight shade over Jack's happiness. Every hour of triumph brings its heartache. Leo was certainly devoid of any tenderer motive in returning than the simple wish to remove pain and do justice without delay. Her words and tone showed it more plainly even than a similar thing was shown the night before; but he soon comforted himself by remembering that she was almost a child yet. "I am always," he said to himself, "making the mistake of thinking of her as older than she is. By and by she will love me."

Poor Jack!

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A DESPERATE RUPTURE.

So the way was still open for Mr. Follansbee to devote himself, without let or hindrance, to preparing Leo to love him when she should get older; and he did devote himself to this, though not yet openly as a lover. He still feared to do that.

Time went on — considerable time. No rival appeared, and yet he could approach no nearer to Leo. He felt the presence of an invisible barrier, and, resolve as he would to cross it by some slight suitor-like demonstration, he could not find the courage.

He still attributed this to prudence. He was only waiting for her to become more acquainted with him — waiting for her to grow more certain that Mrs. Campbell's accusations, which he knew were being meantime breathed around, were false — waiting to be surer that she would receive his addresses favorably, and not rather be astonished and repulsed by them — waiting for her to grow insensibly into love of him. He guarded himself at every point, behaving like a careful protector or a dutiful brother, and watched her to discover the dawning of affection for him.

But service alone cannot wake the highest love. Even personal merit and the absence of great outward disparities cannot wake the highest love. Nothing but the consummate natural adaptation of two spirits to each other can do that.

Of fervent thanks, of surprised delight at the many evidences he managed to give that she was the object of thoughtful planning to give her pleasure, of gentle praying him not to take so much trouble, of enthusiastic desire to serve him and make a suitable return for all his goodness,—of these things there was no lack in Leo; but these things were not what Jack wanted, and particularly he did not want any return of favors.

She, feeling almost oppressed by receiving so many without often being able to show any, and longing to do something to prove that she did not forget nor take as a matter of course all his remarkable kindness to herself and the whole family, always noticed in him a strange, cold reluctance to accepting from her any offices whatever, even a stitch of sewing. Though wondering, she learned to desist from the attempt to perform them. For some inexplicable reason they were disagreeable.

The truth was that Jack, loving Leo, shrank from allowing her to rest in the idea that mutual friendliness and usefulness was the end sought between them.

So she contented herself with saying sometimes, "Oh, Jack! when can I ever repay you!" He had insisted on all of them dropping formality in addressing him, and he had taken similar liberty with them. Again, she would say, "Oh, if there were only something I could do for you, Jack!"

Jack, always secretly well pleased by such words, answered carelessly on one of these occasions, "Oh, there will be by 'n' by. I shall be giving you a chance, one o' these days, to do some great thing for me. You won't fail me then, now will you?" with a jocose pretence of being distrustful.

"I'll never fail you," Leo responded, her eyes dilated with surprise at his doubt; for she was apt to take, for the moment, even jests as sober earnest, being too serious

and truthful herself easily to refer such remarks to a fun-loving disposition. Follansbee's burst of amused laughter, however, informed her that he was "only joking."

Getting still more earnest, she cried, rather hurt, "I'm not joking! I mean every word!" and Follansbee, more convulsed than ever by Leo's juvenile and persistent veracity and candor, and somehow enjoying hugely her reiterated certainty that she would never fail him when that test hour came, continued banteringly, "Would you die for me, Lion-heart?"

"That won't be necessary," Leo answered, confining herself strictly to literal ground.

"We can't tell. You must be ready," said Jack, still playfully.

"I shall be ready, according to need," returned Leo, still seriously.

More than once their conversation had taken some such turn — it may be because both began dimly to anticipate the coming of events that would put to the proof Leo's oft-repeated expressions of gratitude.

As for Leo, perhaps enough had already occurred at the shop to account for any such expectation in her. Good, simple Miss Pratt, who had taken it upon herself from the first to act as a sort of monitor to the apprentice whom she had brought, finding that her revelations had not effected Leo's separation from Follansbee, had again protested with her.

"But he has been our best friend in Utopia," Leo had explained, "and mother and my brothers and I all believe it was spite that started that bad report. So we must uphold him — at any rate till we see some harm in him. But that," she added, with the extravagance of youth, "we never shall see — he's so good."

Miss Pratt, having that impressionable sort of under-

standing which, for the most part, credits the last story presented to it, was at first inclined to adopt Leo's view of Mr. Follansbee as an injured man; but after a moment of reflection she shook her head, saying, "Even so, that's no reason why your reputation should be ruined; and it will be. It's a talkin' place, Utopia is."

Miss Pratt's faculties had been sharpened on some sides by experience.

"Well, all our family are talked about already. There's a shadow on us. Didn't you know it? Don't the others here know it? I often wonder whether they do."

"I guess nobody knows it but me. They didn't in the first place, anyhow, or p'r'aps you wouldn't 'a' been taken. Mr. King told mother, when he found you worked with me; but by that time I was gitting acquainted with you. Besides, I liked you the first time I ever set eyes on you. I make great account o' that; and I'd found out that you was a member, too, or as good as a member. I inquired in particular, you may remember."

"I remember."

"If I find out that a person's a member; it goes ever so far with me; and the folks here are gitting to know you well enough now not to believe much harm o' *you*, anyway, unless they learn to by your hangin' to Jack Follansbee."

Then, hesitating, with the idea that it might not be prudent to expose her own personal trials in Utopia in order to show that she spoke from positive knowledge, but overcoming this feeling, Miss Pratt continued, lowly and impressively: "I came near losin' my reputation once. That's a reason why, when I hear any harm of anybody, I think—sometimes—it may be a mistake. Before, I never thought o' that. But I didn't lose my reputation. I only came near enough to know that it



would be"—here she paused and dropped her voice to a still more impressive whisper—"terrible. To have everybody despise you—everybody turnin' away from you. In my case—" A deep breath of thankfulness came from the kind, conscientious, narrow old maid, whose one pathetically little romance, which had subjected her to the slightest of slight and quickly diverted neighborhood criticisms, seemed to her a mighty unwritten novel, full of tremendous events and deeply stirring episodes. "In my case, it all came out right; that is —"

Ah, the pitifulness of the quivering of the un-kissed lips—beginning of late to draw down at the corners with just the curve of the eyebrows above them—the un-kissed lips that began to qualify somewhat the rightness of the ending which came to the pathetically little romance—an ending that left her respected indeed, but alone! Ah, the pitifulness of the withering woman, growing old resignedly, and taking on wrinkles and prudishness with a faint, flitting smile, and all the while secretly warming the unloved and barren years with the stretched memory of her pathetically little romance!—resignedly, because God knew what was best, and did not see fit to give her anybody but her mother; and cheerfully, because she must not murmur at the Lord! Ah, the pitifulness of her half-deprecating, half-revealed pride because a man—if but a good-for-nothing whom it so scandalized the worthy people of her church to think she could even look at, save afar off, that she meekly hastened to take their wise advice—had once pretended to be fond of her! Ah, the pitifulness of the making much of the meager pittance of love that had fallen to her share, and now must last her through to the end—last her till she came into that sure kingdom that would richly reward her for the pains of this!

Leo, quick to read the unspoken thought of others, said, with impulsive tenderness, "I'll love you! I'll love you!"

At this, poor Miss Pratt, who had begun to recover herself, was thrown back into greater agitation. She struggled in vain to speak or repress her tears. Kissing Leo in a queer, prim way, but so as to convey a sense of good fellowship and good understanding, she went to her work, striving to hide her wet face from the others. Soon she might have been heard humming subduedly, to the accompaniment of her sewing, "Jesus, lover of my soul."

Leo, who now understood Miss Pratt better, and of course shrank from resuming a subject thus cut short, began to wish that her well-meaning friend would again warn her against Jack, affording her in this way an opportunity to explain why she could not decline his acquaintance on the ground urged by Miss Pratt.

Leo disliked to have the kindly spinster think that she willfully despised her counsels. She wanted to show her that she was thankful for her interest, and that she did not scout it as impossible that there might be some such danger as Miss Pratt saw,—danger that the nature of her relations with Follansbee would be mistaken,—only that of course one could not turn out of what one was sure was a right path through fear that some one would think or say it was a wrong one.

In the hope that Miss Pratt would again broach the subject, Leo took pains not to conceal how matters were still standing between Follansbee and herself. Finally, as this brought out nothing, she ventured to introduce it herself, pouring out, with breathless anxiety to convince Miss Pratt and win her approval, all the arguments which had such force for herself, and finishing with the incontrovertible one—"Of course, come what will, and even

if the whole world is opposed, we must do what conscience tells us to."

To Leo's surprise, this sentiment, which seemed to her so very forcible, glanced aside altogether from her friend. Excellent Miss Pratt was not finely enough made to respond to the light touch of the nicest moral considerations — to feel the urgency of reasons that mightily move to generous carelessness for themselves those who obey a nobler law than that of self-preservation. Her feet were on the earth, and her heroism was of the kind which dutifully consults its pastor, prayerfully considers what is best for itself, takes the advice of friends (Miss Pratt thought a great deal of that), and afterwards perceives itself to have been wonderfully preserved and guided by the hand of Providence.

So the little woman smiled lenient disdain on Leo, as on a foolish thing with no proper appreciation of the value of advice, and very likely, even at her age, thinking of a husband. "She can see such good reasons for keepin' that Follansbee!" thought Miss Pratt. "If girls only knew how they look to older people! But I s'pose they've got to be borne with till their wits come to 'em. They all have to go through the silly disorder, jest as babies do with teethin'."

This, however, was the first indication the spinster had seen that Leo was affected with this disorder. She had thought of her as more sensible.

"Don't you think as I do?" Leo inquired anxiously, when Miss Pratt only smiled in that peculiar way.

"No, I don't," was the reply. "I always depend a grea' deal on advice. I hope you'll take it before it's too late. P'r'aps you ain't old enough for folks to think much harm of you yet awhile. You're nothin' but a child now," — here Miss Pratt looked rather severely at Leo, as reproving her supposed precocious matrimonial lean-

ings,—“though it’s hard to think of you as so young. You may come to your senses before it’s too late.”

Leo, listening to these gloomy forebodings with the inward incredulity which, when the present is fair, the young are apt to feel for unpleasant predictions, went thenceforth securely on her way, walking in integrity, and not much disturbed by them.

As for Follansbee, he, as we have seen, had reasons best known to himself for apprehending that the opprobrium resting upon his name would increase rather than diminish, and that Leo’s name would sooner or later suffer openly, as already within his private circle it had suffered, through association with his own. But then, he was as we know going to mend that whole trouble in the end. He was going to marry her. He was going to seal the mouths of his own defamers, and lift her out of reach of any reproach which might meanwhile fall upon her.

While he was waiting, he must of course keep very near to her, that he might save her from other pitfalls and win her heart to himself. Jack fervently wished, nay, hoped, that she might be spared from general slander, and such exemption, he argued, was not impossible. To save her from it he would even have isolated himself from her company for the present, had not his jealousy whispered that to do so might be to lose her entirely.

There was, therefore, he said, no way but to let scandal come, if come it must,—but he welcomed Leo’s growing attachment to the Church of the Intercessor, whose rites, now better understood, had at first seemed to her so singular and so ostentatious.

Brought up at the feet of Christianity, and—principally through that perhaps ablest of all teachers, the universal, matter-of-course faith—profoundly imbued with its beliefs, and having the whole-hearted zeal which

finds a natural home in the Church of England with its historical pre-eminence and its deeply devotional ritual, it would have been strange if she had failed to grow into love of it. The Lord Jesus Christ was her God, and here for her, as she very soon learned, was the most efficient outward help to serve him truly forever. The passion to live with heart, mind, soul, and strength the divine life of which she had always been taught was deeply stirred by these new religious influences.

Follansbee, recognizing in this side of Leo's life a power to counteract bad impressions formed or forming of her, encouraged her devoutness.

He was right. Her ardor in that quarter did not escape the notice of observers; and as she piled week on week and month on month of unfailing service in Mr. Chick's shop, daily threading her sturdy way, at a certain hour in the frosty or dewy, shiny or stormy morning, past the windows of the town, Follansbee, who was a kind of natural detective, and, when he desired to ascertain anything, "sounded" people as darkly and skillfully as if he were engaged on a murder case, became sensible that she was gaining ground. When he did not "sound," he watched; and now he thought he saw the popular spirit of contempt, which had prevailed concerning her, change in more than one instance into quiet absence of censure or positive approbation.

One evening, probably after he had been fishing as his manner was in the deep of some soul, he said to Leo, "I have a compliment for you."

"For me?"

"Yes. One of the first men in Brackton said he'd often noticed you going to work, and didn't think 'twould be easy to find another girl that would be so constant — never missing — going such a distance, and through such storms as you make no account of; and always on the minute."

"Oh, that's nothing!" Leo said, with some scorn for the feeble notions of one of the first men in Brackton. "It's no hardship at all! The hardship would be in not going regularly. I'd rather be always there. I don't like to half do anything; and it's easier, really easier, to be on the minute than behind it."

"Still, some don't think so," answered Follansbee, venturing to disagree somewhat. "This man said he wouldn't go himself through such walking as he'd seen you going through. He said he wouldn't even drive his horse through, if he could help it. Such weather wasn't at all suitable, he said, for any woman to be out in. Drifts, and rains, and everything,—and so early as you are out, too; before the snow is cleared much, when it's snow."

Follansbee, who had a bent for doctoring (he had once commenced the study of medicine), and who was understood through Mrs. Campbell to be "fussy" for his own health, had often urged before Mrs. Dayne that it could not fail to injure Leo to get drenched in the morning, when, at best, her clothing must remain damp a long time; but Mrs. Dayne was never aware that her daughter had anything to endure. He now added, somewhat morosely, to himself, "If you had any mother—a real one—she'd take some means to better your condition, if 'twas only by having a change of stockings and skirts for you to keep at the shop."

Follansbee was getting more and more acquainted with Mrs. Dayne, and liking her less and less; but if he would obtain Leo he must not get himself into her mother's disfavor. So he concealed his aversion, often covering with a grim and determined smile his indignation at what he was learning to look upon as her neglect, indifference, arbitrariness, and selfishness toward her children. Especially it galled him to have Leo's well-being so disregarded, for he looked upon her as somehow already his

property; but he could not say more than he had, so long as he did not allow it to be suspected that his attitude toward her was that of a suitor.

Mrs. Dayne had continued to carry out her policy in the neighborhood where she had settled, and had made herself obnoxious to many besides Mrs. Campbell by the coldness and harshness of her manners, or by more positive manifestations of resentment — resentment which she often felt with good cause; for the prejudice of which the family was the object frequently revealed itself in ways of which only those who have been similarly situated and treated can appreciate the sting.

Having once begun this course, the reasons why she should continue it were multiplied. To show now any weakening toward those who were doing her injustice would be, she considered, to acknowledge their treatment fair. Hence where the prejudice existed, it was soon augmented by personal umbrage stirred by her disagreeableness; and where it did not exist,—and, through watching to discover it, morbid fancies began to swarm in her mind,—its place was filled by an antipathy created by her own behavior.

Association favors the dissipation of ungrounded dislike; but none of the family save Mrs. Dayne had much occasion or opportunity to pass a word with neighbors or tradespeople. Therefore it happened that she came to represent them all. The children were not supposed to be very different from their mother. The impressions made by the original difficulty were being strengthened rather than removed by her.

To be sure, nothing could be said against the present exemplary conduct of the boys; but, benumbed by a knowledge of the unfavorable opinion entertained of them, and with a refined perception that the circumstances placed them in no position to make advances to

their fellow-workmen, they attempted no social intercourse — perhaps as much through over-sensitiveness on their part as anything. Leo, even more than they, shrank within herself in Utopia, moving through it downcast and speechless, under a still more painful diffidence and sense of taboo than theirs.

Her case, nevertheless, was different, in that she was being knit into numerous relations at the Church of the Intercessor. She lived a twofold existence. At work for and against her were two powerful opposing agents, the issue of whose contest was as yet doubtful. Her life in the church and at Mr. Chick's was tending to establish her in popular regard, while her own misunderstood retirement and reserve in Utopia, Follansbee's nearness to herself and the family, and her mother's foe-making spirit were striving to thwart this good.

Leo had made remarkable strides in the shop. In spite of her oft-reprimanded though never-repeated fault of having, that second morning, hung her things on a hook not hers, she had found great and unusual favor in the eyes of Mr. and Mrs. Chick — for the forewoman had, some time back, inveigled the tailor into opening to her the hid matters of his unsearchable breast, and now she called him Theodore, while otherwise everything at the shop remained as it was.

In private council for the advancement of their united interests, Mr. and Mrs. Chick had unanimously agreed that she was "smart." While so agreeing, they had dropped their voices, as though in the belief that the whole body of tailors had designs on Leo's services and their ears at the keyhole of this consultation. Mr. Chick, who, when he was in earnest, addressed people as "sir" without reference to considerations of sex, and felt the feebleness of the term "smart" to characterize Leo's fiery methods of working, whispered impressively to Mrs.



Chick across the table of their conference, "Yes, sir; she's smarter than — chain lightning." From that day Mrs. Chick dropped her morning custom of warning Leo to keep on her own hook.

Mr. and Mrs. Chick revered smartness. Though slow to believe in its existence, they delighted to do it honor after it had proven itself. It fairly deserved to prosper. Smart trickery, if not too flagrant, wrinkled Mr. Chick's face with an indulgent smile, and, whether too flagrant or not, exposed Mrs. Chick's tight-shut teeth in a wiry laugh,—it was so smart! and the sufferer by it should have been smarter—should have looked out for himself better! "But it was smart, I tell you, sir!" was Mr. Chick's regular and somewhat admiring comment upon doubtful transactions of a keen sort; while the selfishness which mercilessly drives the weak to the wall, he, though himself far from being at present a heartless man, rather palliated as "only business," and, though hard, perfectly "legitimate"—a term that he very often employed.

In spite, however, of his admiration for smartness, Mr. Chick still prided himself upon his honor and squareness, and whenever he had occasion to do anything hard but "legitimate" took pains to let it be known that he did not "want" to.

When, with no purpose whatever of gaining a reputation, Leo hurled herself into her work in the way so common and so necessary with her in everything that she had not thought of it as a peculiarity, and won Mr. and Mrs. Chick's unqualified admiration, she won all. They immediately treated her with marked and genial favor, talked confidentially to her of their plans, and encouraged her to be even as one of them. Leo, in her ambition, told them how much she would like to learn everything about tailoring—she hoped she should sometime. She

did not like to know part of anything. Nothing but to learn every bit of a trade would really satisfy anybody, she thought.

Circumstances had given her a lowly occupation, but, she often thought, all work that is alike in motive is alike in dignity; you can bring the same aim to one calling that you can to another, to brick-laying that you can to picture-painting,—the aim to fill, as nearly as the uttermost bound of your capacity will do so, the place given you; you can go about your Father's business as well through tailoring as you can through temple-building. Leo's life had always been a blindly reaching one, and here was something to be perfect in.

Mr. and Mrs. Chick set about gratifying her desire for masterful knowledge. At the white-heat of earnestness, she soon progressed enough to cause Mr. Chick to declare to his wife, in consulting with her on her approaching absence from the shop, that he would rather have Leo in her place there than any one else.

It was a proud evening for the late apprentice when the tailor and his wife, forming themselves into a committee of two, came as she was preparing to go home, and, with an air of mystery, requested her to remain till the others had gone; and it was a grateful, delighted, exultant heart which that night poured out the good news to Follansbee.

"Oh, what do you think, Jack! I'm to be Mr. Chick's assistant! Mrs. Chick is going to stay at home. Of course I can't make good her loss — not fully; but Mr. Chick said he'd help a good deal at first, and that I would soon be able to be left to myself. Aren't they kind? and isn't God good? and oughtn't I to be thankful? There's only one thing to be sorry for: I'm afraid some that are older and have been with Mr. Chick longer — I've been with him only just a year and a half — will

feel hurt; but when I spoke about that, he said that if I refused his offer he shouldn't make it to anybody else in the shop, he should find some one outside — a man. So it's all settled!"

Leo was quite breathless. Her happiness was rather dampened, however, by Follansbee's manner of receiving the great intelligence.

"I'm glad for you, Leo," he said quietly, and, as she thought, rather sadly.

"Why! Don't you think it's — splendid?"

"Yes. Oh, yes! Certainly I do," Jack hastened to say dutifully.

Leo was not satisfied. His words were right, but they lacked heartiness. She knew that he was not wholly glad; and yet she knew, too, that it was not because he did not wish her well. "Perhaps it makes him remember *he* has never got on," she thought. "Perhaps it would have been kinder not to show so much delight. Only I hope the folks at home won't behave so coolly."

Follansbee gloomily resumed: "You're too young to work so, Leo. No girl only in her seventeenth year ought to, and be so exposed, and with nothing—" He was going to say "to eat," for he had observed enough of Mrs. Dayne's household methods to discover her practice of making culinary labors rather an accident than a business. He began over again, and substituted something about cold dinners.

"You're not really strong. You're all nerves. You overdo; and with nothing t'—to sustain you."

"Oh, I don't overdo! I like to work!"

Inwardly she thought, "So this is the reason why Jack isn't wholly pleased. Poor old Jack! He's demented on the subject of my health! He insists on thinking I'm sick! It is fussy in him, and so trying to me to be held back when I feel exactly like rushing on! It's these

things that make Jack seem so womanish. But then, he means so well, and is so careful of me, that it's wrong to feel any dislike on account of his little ways. Still, he's foolish!"

And Jack himself? More than one cause contributed to depress his spirit. Leo was going forward. She was making a place for herself in the world. She was doing better than he; and it was getting late with him.

Then, besides,—and doubtless this was Jack's greatest trouble,—would Leo, growing so successful and prosperous, ever need him? Would she not begin to think how small a part he was acting in life, how spiritless his way at Mrs. Campbell's?—in short, how meager a man he was?

Meantime, how was it with Mrs. Campbell? Far from having built herself up by her artful proceeding in Leo's behalf, she had managed to arouse pretty thoroughly the Utopian mind to censure of herself. If Follansbee were such as she had represented, why had she harbored him so long? Perhaps she was afraid to offend him; but it was no wonder she felt chagrined and revengeful at being deserted for a young thing!

Perceiving the turn the matter had taken, Mrs. Campbell began to address herself to defence; but the more she talked the more she involved herself and consequently Leo. If Follansbee had left Mrs. Campbell for another, what was the inference concerning that other?

Some knowledge of this state of things having at length come to Mrs. Dayne, who was not in the way of getting early advices, she became greatly excited. She saw that Leo was really giving people good cause to think hardly of her, and that it was a duty not to give such cause. "We must shun even the seeming to be evil," she righteously declared, "and then, if people despise us, the case is altogether different."

Such chanced now to be the mother's virtuous and conciliatory mood in this matter. Follansbee must be cut at once and entirely. That would be showing a suitable respect for public opinion. If Follansbee was getting to have so bad a reputation, it was quite just that Leo also should be ill thought of. She had a chance to set herself right, and she owed it to society to do so.

One evening, after supper, when they were all sitting about the table, Mrs. Dayne announced, "I have something to say that I want you all to hear."

Then she told them minutely how the daughter was beginning to be muttered against.

"But this," she concluded, "hasn't gone so far yet that there's no remedy. Leo is getting to have responsibilities of her own now. She must dismiss Follansbee, and then it'll be seen that she cares for the speech o' people, and respects herself, and all will be well."

Leo, who had sat open-mouthed and aghast, ejaculated, "Oh, mother! I can't cut Jack! We promised we wouldn't—not while *we* saw no harm in him. I said I'd always stand by him. Don't we believe those things are all a lie? I know they are. Oh, don't—"

"Leo!"

His sister had never before heard Seth speak in that tone. It was not one of disapprobation—only an assertion of himself as a power, an authority, among them all, no longer to be overlooked; as though he said, "*I* will see that right is done."

For nearly two years now the young man had been suppressing his growing dissatisfaction at what he more and more plainly saw to be his mother's despotism. He had accorded to her the outward deference which she had always received and still expected; but he had watched her. He was getting acquainted with her; and often, little as she suspected it, she came perilously near

to exciting the positive detestation — and that, too, the reluctant detestation — of her own man-child; for let no parent think that his mere parenthood will always glorify him to his offspring. No office dignifies a man which the man does not dignify; and there comes a time when parents are weighed by their children, and in a scale which is not moved by the fact that they are the givers of life in the course of nature. Partiality is not to be forever compelled by consanguinity.

Seth had long been forming the purpose to remonstrate seriously with his mother against her continuing to inflict so grave an injury upon them all as to refuse to remove from Utopia, and to show to her, if necessary, what a bitter change she was forcing into his opinion of her; but until this incident at the supper-table he had not been ready. By it his design was precipitated. This was the time to settle conclusively whether or not she would yield her unreasonable will for the good of her children, Leo especially. She saw for herself, now, that her daughter's future happiness and usefulness were imperiled. He must not let this golden moment pass without employing to the fullest its opportunity.

Turning to his sister, he said calmly, though with his face a shade paler than she had ever seen it, "Leo, you are right. You cannot cut Jack."

Then, addressing his mother, whose flush of amazement at this first strong refusal to obey her he had not seen, "We none of us can cut him," he said. "It would be a base thing. We have reason to believe that most of this very disaffection that makes you want Leo to avoid him was brought upon him by his sticking to us against his boarding-mistress. For any of us to turn from him, under these circumstances, is out of the question; but it is out of the question, too, for us to let Leo walk straight into the trouble that is sure to come to her through

slander. We must move away. All our other interests demand it, too. I have written to uncle Ferdinand,"—here Seth began to talk faster, more anxiously, and almost apologetically,—“and have received some letters from him. It looks now as if there would be an opening for us every way better than this, in his vicinity. I thought I wouldn't say anything about what I was doing till I was sure the chance could be had. I shouldn't have spoken now if it hadn't been for this. There's no use in making a great ado to get people's consent to things before you know they'll ever be called upon to act up to it.”

Then, turning suddenly to Leo, he asked, “You wouldn't object to going away from here?”

“No-o. Of course I shouldn't like to leave my work, and Mr. Thayer, and Miss Fessenden. And shouldn't we miss Jack, though! But if it's best, I'd go—of course. Of course I would,” she added sturdily, to reassure Seth.

“All right, then, sis! We'll go!”

With a gleam of his old boyishness, now so seldom illuminating his manner, Seth waved his hand, as though with the intention of supplementing the action with three rousing cheers.

Mrs. Dayne had been sitting speechless, at first with surprise, and then with indignation,—though not so much at the nature as at the fact of Seth's interference,—indignation which she tried to make felt through silence and the severe glare which she fixed upon him and Leo. The latter had been too much occupied with hurrying thoughts concerning the changes which this proposed sudden departure would involve to notice at once her mother's displeasure. Seth noticed it, but carefully averted his eyes, choosing not to appear to imagine that she could be otherwise than gratified and concurrent.

Mrs. Dayne's old modes of government were losing their effect on at least one of the family! The independent strain that had got from somewhere into Leo's blood seemed to be working now in Seth.

But here Mrs. Dayne spoke:

"So you're going!"

She paused a moment, then went on:

"If you wish to go," she said coldly to Seth, with the old all-powerful I-shall-despise-you air, "and leave"—glancing at Luke, who, as usual, was acting as a sort of personified Silent Approval of his brother—"all of us here, why, of course there is nothing to be said. You are of age. Besides, I don't believe in coercion."

"Do you mean to say," demanded Seth, whose patience was fast weakening, and who was trembling on the verge of open and unrestrained revolt, "that, consid'ring the situation Leo is placed in here, you will refuse to move away?"

"That is what I mean to say."

An oath—the first they had ever heard from him—tore a white way for itself over Seth's lips.

"Then," he cried, giving way entirely, "stay here alone. I will take Leo and go. The risk shall not be run of keeping her here."

"It shall."

Those two sat long, eying each other,—the stalwart, pale-lipped man, angrier, perhaps, than ever before in his whole life,—the resolute woman, suppressing her excitement well, that she might betray no unwise sign of reduction; realizing that this was a test case, and that if she failed to vindicate her authority now she never could hereafter.

Seth was the first to quail. He remembered that Leo was still lawfully bound to obey, as her mother had hinted; and as he now encountered that mother's un-



flinching gaze he realized his impotence to persuade her not to use, to the fullest if need be, her advantage. To be sure, he could perhaps carry his point by breaking entirely with her and taking violent measures; but he was not ready to do that. He could not yet throw off wholly the yoke of childhood.

Mrs. Dayne saw him quail, and strove to drive the nail home.

"You will find," she said, "that I am mistress still. Now," falling into her natural tone, "Leo will remain here; but there is no need of her running any risk, as you are pleased to call it. Let her have done with Follansbee."

Mrs. Dayne had suddenly dropped entirely the use of their friend's first name.

"Leo," said Seth desperately, and not deigning to pay any attention to his mother, "will you go with me to uncle Ferdinand's?"

"Oh, don't let's leave mother!" she begged. "It would be wrong."

Leo had not yet arrived at Seth's position of utter distrust of her mother.

He could only groan in spirit.

Then Mrs. Dayne said, rather triumphantly, "You see she wouldn't go with you. If she would, I would hold her—legally, if there was no other way. Now, Leo, will you tell Follansbee that you will have nothing more to do with him? You can tell him as pleasantly as you please, you know."

"Oh, don't make me do that! I can't! I've promised and promised that if the time came—"

"Why do you put the disagreeable business on her?" interrupted Seth savagely. "If you want Jack dismissed, dismiss him yourself, and let the blame of it rest on you—the one that *is* to blame."

"Leo is the one to do it. She is a child no longer. She has responsibilities of her own."

"Then why don't you treat her accordingly? Why do you make her decisions for her? What you mean is, that she has the responsibilities of a woman and the obligation to obey of a child—that's what you mean," said Seth bitterly.

"I shall not coerce Leo in this," said Mrs. Dayne, ignoring Seth's words. "She is old enough to understand it and act for herself. I shall let her do so. Then the whole responsibility will rest upon her, and, whatever happens, she won't have anybody but herself to blame."

"It's false!" Seth cried, freshly enraged. "The responsibility is yours, and you can't shirk it like that!" Then, growing calmer, but leaning over the table toward his mother, and speaking with a terrible ominousness that made him seem like some fearless old prophet denouncing judgment, he continued—

"If any harm happens to Leo, her blood be upon *you*."

"You talk," said Mrs. Dayne rather nervously,—for she had her taint of superstition,—*"as if this was a great matter. If you didn't approve of Utopia when you came here, you should have gone home at once."*

Seth looked his contempt of his mother's unfairness. She always was unfair. As if she did not know that he could not have gone home to be again a burden to that home!

"There's no need of so much high tragedy," Mrs. Dayne went on. "Nothing serious has happened to Leo yet. She's done well enough so far, and only needs now to take another right step. If it's so painful to you to stay here, *you'd* better go to uncle Ferdinand's."

"I shall not go. My place is here with Leo."

Rising, and, in defiance of his mother's presence, passing round to where his sister sat, the young man, strug-

gling with tears, began smoothing Leo's hair with both his steel-grimed hands. Jumping up and leaning her head lovingly against him, she exclaimed, "Seth! What does make you feel so? It doesn't seem really dreadful to me — this about me — not at all — as it does to you."

"You don't know anything at all about it, sis. There's only one thing that can make it any less dreadful, and I s'pose I shall have to learn to be content with that. Leo, whatever they say of you, any time, you never will *be* — wrong, will you?"

"Why, Seth, of course not!" she cried, with that fierce earnestness of honesty which always provoked amusement in Follansbee.

"No! — you won't; — you won't," said Seth slowly, with a satisfied air, as he studied her face. "But," glooming again, "something more than uprightness is needed."

"I don't see what more."

"Why, in order to get along, a person must be respected."

"I think it's getting along just to be respectable. I don't think it's so much matter, then, if we are looked down upon."

"There! That's just the way you have in everything!" exclaimed Seth impatiently. "You're not practical. You're unwise. You're all the time wasting yourself. You get a notion into your head that it's right for you to do a certain thing, and away you go! You never look at it on all sides, never take everything into the account. You look at it on one side,—that it's right,—and there's an end of it with you. You never stop to think how it'll strike other folks."

"And you," muttered Mrs. Dayne under her breath, "never stop, lately, to think how your conduct'll strike me."

Seth did not catch what his mother said, nor care what she said. He continued, to Leo:

"You never stop to think what the effect of a right thing'll be. No matter if it's go'n' to take your own head off—it's all the same. It isn't even sensible to do so. It upsets the very thing you're working for; for if what you do don't look right, it's go'n' to pass for a bad thing, ain't it? And what passes for a bad thing ain't go'n' to do any good in the world, is it? I'm not speaking now of this matter of Jack's,—you're right in that,—but of your general ways."

Leo was pondering and preparing an answer, but Seth resumed, in explanation:

"Of course I'm for doing right—don't think I'm slighting that part of it; but I'm for something more. I'm for doing right so that it'll bring, taking everything into the account, the most good to all concerned, myself and everybody else. That's the only way to get along. But you'll outgrow some o' your foolishness. You'll learn, as you get older, to look out for yourself a little better. After a while you'll learn it," and Seth went out of the kitchen and wearily up to his own room.

He had taken his long-contemplated stand—and what was the result? Not only did all things remain unchanged, but his attack upon them had, by failing, confirmed and strengthened his mother's sway.

"There's only one way now"—such was the judgment he arrived at, sitting at the window, in the dark, and looking sadly out into shadowy Utopia lit by infrequent lamps. "If Leo must stay we must all stay, and do the best we can, under the circumstances, for ourselves and her."

He could not see a better course—not then.

As soon as Seth had left Leo and her mother, the latter said, "The quicker you act on the advice he's

given you, to look out for yourself, the better off you'll be; and the first thing to do in that line is to send Follansbee off."

"Don't say that! I can't, mother!"

Here followed a great many words from Mrs. Dayne, which Leo received in dejected silence. Then came the critical question:

"Will you give him his dismissal?" demanded the mother.

"Oh, I can't, mother! How can I, after all—"

"Stop saying 'can't.' So far as ability is concerned, you can do it, and you know you can. Will you?"

"Don't make me. It wouldn't be right."

"Say either 'I will,' or, 'I will not.'"

"Could I explain all about it, and tell him you wished it?"

"No. If you told him I wished and you didn't, he wouldn't keep away. Nothing but thinking you did it yourself could break him up altogether. Mind, I don't lay any command on you. I know too well the effects of coercion. I leave it entirely to you to decide. You are to understand that you have your own will. I take no responsibility. The only way is for you to *have* the same will that your mother has, and then express that will to Follansbee as yours. Will you—of your own choice, remember?"

A burst of tears from Leo.

"Will you? Say either 'I will,' or, 'I will not.'"

"I will not," sobbed Leo.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### TWO SOCIETIES.

AFTER this, things in the Dayne family went on outwardly much as before; but there was in reality a great difference. The mother had said that she should have no future responsibility on account of her daughter; and her avoidance of the slightest approach to a further remonstrance against Follansbee's retention forced upon Leo the sickening conviction that her mother had cast her off.

If she would only break that reproachful silence! But no! Leo had gone her own way. Now let her take the consequences—let them all take the consequences. Such was the language of Mrs. Dayne's behavior. Leo kept hoping for a change, her heart meantime growing heavier and heavier under her mother's manner.

When she chose, Mrs. Dayne could make her anger felt without doing anything whatever that could be pointed to as an evidence of its existence. No common observer of her and her daughter now would have seen anything wrong; yet there was nothing right. No pleasant striving on the part of Leo to placate her mother did any good.

Day after day, filled with a great yearning, she longed and resolved to throw herself upon her mother's heart, and pour out there all her own love, begging her forgiveness for the annoyance which conscience, not will-

fulness, forced her to inflict; but when she returned home into that forbidding presence she received a cold check. She was met by the same dead indifference of the morning, and her tongue cleaved to the roof of her mouth. Sometimes she lingered about the kitchen, helping, and meditating how to begin; but that speechless woman, going about to all appearance wholly incognizant that anything unusual agitated her daughter, had thus far kept Leo silent. It was sure, however, to be only a matter of time. Sooner or later, speak she must.

Meanwhile, Miss Pratt noticed her young friend's depression, and, suspecting Follansbee of being in one way or another to blame for it, rallied her, in the convenient noon-hour, and, finding her not wholly free to talk, really began to think he had something very serious to answer for. Hinting as much brought out from Leo a quick defence of Jack; and as this did not appear to exonerate him altogether to Miss Pratt, Leo indicated the real cause of her dejection.

She saw no other way. However disagreeable it might be to reveal a matter, it never occurred to her — at least, in a case where justice to another demanded that something should be said — that there was any exit but to tell the whole truth. Where a more wary person would set a questioner's curiosity at rest by partial revelations, Leo was completely helpless. Much vexation had this weakness always occasioned her mother, who was never at a loss for a quick thought to baffle the inquisitive. Mrs. Dayne's comments upon her daughter's deficiency in this respect commonly ended with the regretful remark, "Well, I don't know as you can help it. You're just like your father."

When Miss Pratt learned the true reason of Leo's lowness of spirits she looked at her with fresh amazement, if not with disgust. She thought her precocity

and self-sufficiency were getting to need most positive reproof.

"Don't you think you're rather young," she said peculiarly, casting a meaning glance at Leo, "to take so much on yourself—deciding, without ever asking advice, and against somebody that was so much older, that you couldn't give Jack Follansbee the go-by? You've had my advice long ago; but there's better'n mine to be had—more settlin'. There's Mr. Thayer; or any minister. I've always noticed that if anything comes up, here in the shop, for you to do, no matter how hard it is" (this with a little tendency to soften the reprimand), "you never seem to think it's possible for you to get any help. You act as if you didn't know there was a soul in the place but you. You've got to do it all. You go and put your shoulder under loads that don't belong to you. Now don't you see that you're rather young?" Miss Pratt gave again the odd glance.

"You think I'm conceited!" exclaimed Leo, in a way that deepened Miss Pratt's amazement and rather diminished her disgust—it was such a joyful voice.

"W-e-l-l," said Miss Pratt, slowly and doubtfully now, as she scanned Leo's face, "it's natural at your time o' life."

"That's just the trouble with me!" continued Leo, still with the manner which so puzzled Miss Pratt. "I'm conceited. It's exactly as you say. I never even thought of asking anybody's opinion. I hardly ever do think of it, and yet somebody might be able to help me—give me new light; for it's miserable to be doing as mother doesn't want me to. Yet I can't see any other way, and Seth can't. But perhaps he's prejudiced. I am conceited, and very conceited. It's in the marrow of my bones. It's almost that that Seth said, too,—about my thinking I was right, and then going ahead without stopping for anything else."



Leo was still in a happy frame, and spoke with a happy voice.

"Are—you—*glad*?" asked Miss Pratt, in such hopeless bewilderment that there flashed upon Leo the ludicrousness of that aspect of the case which her appearance of satisfaction had presented to her interrogator.

She seldom laughed immoderately—her life had had too much of seriousness; but now, muffling her face in her apron, she gave vent to uncontrolled merriment. Miss Pratt, too, laughed to see Leo laugh. When the latter recovered herself,—only, however, to relapse into frequent smiles,—she said, "No. It wasn't because I was glad I had the failing—why, of course not. I was glad I had found it out, that was all. Only last Sunday the sermon was about that very thing. I don't mean about conceit, but— Well, I'll tell you. He said—"

"Was it Mr. Thayer?"

"Yes. He said that often our earthly friends that love us most injure us with their love. Sometimes they don't see our faults; sometimes when they do see them they don't reprove us; sometimes when they do reprove us they don't do it so that it helps us. They may be too gentle about it, or too harsh. That's where our heavenly Friend is different. He loves us just the same—only more; but He has as much wisdom as He has love. He doesn't make any mistakes. What His love thinks out for us His wisdom manages. Every single thing," here Leo rose up in her earnestness, "that comes in every single life comes direct from Him, and always means something in particular. So Mr. Thayer said that when we had any trouble sent to us, the first thing to do was to search in ourselves for sin. It may be that it is some very secret sin indeed that God is trying to show to us—like this of mine. Sometimes, though, affliction isn't sent wholly for correction. Sometimes it's sent for in-

struction—to set us thinking, perhaps about getting a new Christian grace; but always the first thing to do is to look and see if it's sent against a sin. So I've been trying to see what made God send this trouble to me; and it may be I've discovered. That's what I was pleased about."

"That was a nice sermon—comfortin'," said Miss Pratt, wiping her eyes and beginning to think more highly than ever of Leo. "I wish I could 'a' heard the whole. Didn't he say there was any doubt about whether God sends every partic'lar thing to every partic'lar one of us?"

"No. He said there wasn't; for God numbers even the hairs of our heads."

"Yes," assented Miss Pratt, brightening with renewed conviction under the force of this directly scriptural argument. "I wish I could 'a' heard it," she repeated regretfully and with uncritical admiration. "If I wasn't a member where I am," she presently continued, "I believe I'd sooner join the Episcopalians than any o' the others."

Miss Pratt's emphasis was in allusion to Leo's approaching confirmation. Mr. Thayer always interested himself in the spiritual condition of any and every one of his parishioners. Leo's constancy and zeal had led him very soon to speak with her on the duty of outwardly enrolling herself in Christ's army. Her faith in Christian doctrine and her aspiration to live the godly life were seen to be as strong as the most careful doorkeeper in the house of the Lord could desire; and now she was to confess Christ before men on the next occasion when the bishop should visit the parish.

In spite of the busy prosperity of his church, the laborious rector often encountered among its members more or less indifference to its work, more or less excusing of

themselves from the duties, sometimes onerous, which his never-flagging energy solicited them to discharge. He was touched by Leo's cheerful readiness to respond to any call; for she was no longer Miss Fessenden's pupil, but had been called to other service.

More and more, as the constraint and shyness which had at first fettered her in his company wore off, did her genuineness—that which so amused Follansbee—impress and win Mr. Thayer, and the more frequently did the comment arise in his mind, "An Israelite indeed in whom is no guile." She was another evidence to him—he had seen so many such evidences! Miss Fessenden for instance—of the beauty and power of that divine system of which she was a product.

"It is fortunate, I think," he had said to Miss Fessenden, "that Miss Dayne's powers are turned in the right direction. They would be sure to carry her somewhere forcibly. In everything she works with her might. What did you think of her in your class? Isn't her mind a very—earnest one?"

"Well—yes—I suppose so. To tell the truth, I should have called it troublesome. She wants to investigate everything so deeply—why, almost as I should imagine a skeptic might! You know there are things that can't be reasoned upon. They're above reason and beyond it—things, I mean, like the Holy Trinity; but she wasn't satisfied to let anything pass for granted. Everything must be proved from the Bible, and one passage compared with another, and the 'whole meaning,' as she was always saying, be made out."

"That was not skepticism," said the minister smilingly.

"No, of course not; and I really feel," purred shining Miss Fessenden, adroitly turning humble and pensive because suspecting that she had not been exactly on the right tack with Mr. Thayer in seeming to discourage

scriptural research, "that I'm so incompetent" (prettily); "and my duty to my aunts" (the pew-full of elderly females in black, of whom it was hard to remember which were childless widows, and which were maiden ladies, and which were Miss Fessenden's own blood aunts, and which were aunts because they had married Miss Fessenden's uncles with a competence) "doesn't allow me to make as deep a preparation for teaching as I should delight to. It is a great trial to me not to prepare myself better; but" (melancholy-sweet) "we must learn to sacrifice pleasure to duty — always," gathering her crapes, nun-fashion, around her. "But for weeks" (here a totally new idea enabled Miss Fessenden to put the finishing touch to her performance) "before you took Miss Dayne out of my class, I had been thinking whether I ought not to tell you how unqualified I considered myself to teach her,—she's so studious!—and ask you to take her into your class. It was what she needed—a true teacher, with the whole Book at his command."

Miss Fessenden had consummate tact — tact more than equal to her superficiality; and she knew that to the refined an open compliment may be not only displeasing, but nauseating. Hence her numerous praises were always, as now, implications rather than statements.

Mr. Thayer took her professed distrust of herself, and her bewailment of her trials in sacrificing her scholarly tastes to duty, as entirely genuine, and tried to cheer her.

"I am certain," he said, "that Miss Dayne would have been quite comfortless if she had been removed to my class. I have heard her express a great deal of love and admiration for her teacher. You should know that it is not always hard study that makes the best teacher. There are other qualifications quite as essential, and I am sure that you possess these."

"You are very kind to say so. I do try to do as well as I can by my class; and whenever I part with a scholar I am quite lost—myself—for a long while. I was when Miss Dayne went. I come" (regretfully) "to be so bound up in people!"

"I think this is the mark of the real teacher. I am afraid"—and a momentary shadow passed over the clergyman's cheerfulness—"that here is where I fail. I fear I do not give enough love to my class, enough close personal interest. My efforts and energies have to be divided into so many different streams that I am often troubled with the thought that my class—and as it is composed almost wholly of the young, I feel a special responsibility for it—is but poorly nourished, even, perhaps, in the matter of clear presentations of doctrinal truth."

Thus conversed these two, so alike in outward expressions, so unlike in inward realities. Both, to be sure, were walking in the way of their fathers, and walking there rather because they found themselves in it than because they had ever sought and won, with strong crying and tears, a sorely needed path of peace for their torn feet.

One, nevertheless, was stepping, conscientiously, prayerfully, self-suspectingly, through this way to meet his trusted God; sometimes speaking words which struck the strong or original mind as trite, lifeless, wearisome, but still, if not with blaring trumpets and proud colors, at least with patient use of such powers as had been bestowed upon him, performing his daily faithful little march as Christ's soldier, and polishing by hard use his moral platitudes, until, thus seen, they were blazing gems. The other was dallying, light as a butterfly, from side to side of the highway; settling for a moment, with graceful wings, upon every gorgeous flower that beckoned her

to pleasure; with no one special earnest object — led by a thousand transient and easily accomplished ones.

Dominating these, however, Miss Fessenden, untouched by any sense of the meanness of sham, had one larger and less mutable aim — that of pleasing everybody at all times and in all things. Perhaps this task was never undertaken by one better fitted to compass it perfectly. She studied deportment, she cultivated address. That silken voice and disarming smile stirred no belligerence. Her words might be true or false, but they must be pleasing. She possessed the rare power of flattering indiscriminately and yet making each feel that he alone was the object of her distinctive esteem — unless one discovered her peculiar methods. The most boorish person was not too insignificant for her to take pains to charm.

It was understood that Miss Fessenden had unsatisfied longings in respect to "surroundings"; that she was somehow very particularly susceptible to the influence of things about her, and very sharply pained by any deprivation on the artistic side of her nature. To be sure, the house in Brackton was handsome, and so was the furniture, and so was the carriage; but Miss Fessenden had seen life on a grander scale — before she came to Brackton with the influx from the metropolis. Some of her wealthy relatives still remained there, and with them, in spite of her duty to her aunts, she managed to spend a good part of the time.

They were supposed to exemplify the style of living for which she was fitted, and from which it was a great trial, though one to be uncomplainingly borne in the interests of duty, to be separated. In listening to her for any length of time, one was sure to be shown, not obtrusively, but still shown, a good many glimpses of the ease, freedom, and elegance of that other society in which she was in the habit of mingling when not called by stern moral obligations to reside in Brackton.

Miss Fessenden was always being called to do something or give up doing something which it was vitally opposed to her personal happiness or advantage to do or give up doing. She had the faculty of representing her life to herself as an altar, and of imagining herself a sacrifice upon it. The description of this sight to her friends actually often drew tears to her eyes. It made no sort of difference that her immolations of herself served herself better than anything else could — she was a bleeding victim still.

For instance, it did not change in the least the touchingly self-abnegating nature of her service to her aunts that she had been dotingly brought up by them, or at least by some of them, and was the prospective heiress of those conservative money-bags which would hereafter enable her to flutter perpetually in the airy play of her bright-winged kind. A sacrifice she appeared to herself to be, and as a sacrifice she represented herself to others, and with such manifestation of sweet and resigned dutifulness that even her aunts believed that "poor Ella" was somehow continually passing through the furnace of affliction, and they never yet had quite justified themselves for joining the company that had migrated to Brackton, thus taking poor Ella away from "town."

As to her pupil, Miss Fessenden had been right so far as her studiousness was concerned. Leo had felt the touch of infinite Aspiration, and it had thrilled her like a lover's first kiss. Not only in her relations at the church, at the shop, at home, did she long to increase in strength and beneficent power, but in all things. To *be*, not merely to seem to be, — this was what she wanted. To go down to all the springs of her being and enrich them, that she might be a stream of blessing, — this was the wide wish that had come into her heart. Just over the borders of womanhood, she had been seized with that

divine hunger and thirst for all improvement which is the beginning of being truly filled—seized with that sense of entire poverty which is the beginning of being truly rich.

Standing there, aroused to a perception of grievous destitution in herself,—destitution in scholarship, culture, graces,—and strongly determined to do the very best she could to mend her incompleteness now that she was awake, she had looked about for means, and had turned eagerly to the only source of mental instruction within her reach—books. Eagerly, very eagerly, because learning within easy reach commonly excites not so fervent a love as learning behind a barrier. The inaccessibility of a goal is the measure of the ardor to gain it. We cannot pine much for what we may easily possess, but only for what we may not. Lack of opportunity is what makes opportunity seem golden.

So Leo had faced the situation, and was now pressing spiritedly forward. In the early morning, before the others in the house were up, she was acting the part of the hard student. Of late the dreary and apparently deepening and immovable depression on her never too happy home, added to the strain to which, as the head of Mr. Chick's establishment, she unsparingly subjected herself, had affected her powerfully, but she was too full of fire and courage to think of needing any respite; and, since she made all the events of her life subjects of prayer, she had prayed that she might be enabled to progress, to become in all regards the best she was capable of becoming, and thus to do for herself and all about her the best things in the best way.

When one of the young women at the shop came to her as though specially sent, and said she had wondered whether Miss Dayne might not be one who would like to join the Brackton Literary and Educational Society, Leo



thought she received the answer to her petitions. She was told that some of the first teachers of Trenburg, residing in Brackton, were its directors, and that she could have its oversight without spending any time at its social meetings or festivities. She accepted as from God the help which the Brackton Literary and Educational Society would afford her in studying more systematically.

She was to join it immediately after her confirmation; for the Brackton Literary and Educational Society required a certain definite amount of work to be done, and Leo could not pledge the requisite time and attention now. All her thought must be given to undisturbed preparation to "renew the solemn promise and vow" made in baptism; for that rite had been administered to her soon after entering Miss Fessenden's class, Mrs. Dayne not having allowed her children to receive it in infancy, probably on account of an aversion to coercing them, even at that tender age.

After her conversation with Miss Pratt, Leo thought much upon the defect in herself which had been so plainly indicated. The more closely she watched, the more "conceit" she discovered. It appeared to be the very groundwork of her nature. Miss Pratt was right in accusing her of never asking for help; but she was striving to overcome her fault. Great were her surprise and mortification, however, to find how deep-seated it had become. If there was any piece of tailoring that required extra attention or exertion, she took it upon herself, just as if, indeed, there were no one else in the world; but when she did come to her senses and sternly drew rein on herself, dividing the labor with others or seeking their opinion as to methods,—a process fraught, in spite of her urgency, with more or less confusion and delay,—Mr. Chick became nervous, and, taking his assistant aside, inquired into her motive for making the change.

When he learned it, he judged the whole matter in a way so foreign to Leo's that she stood speechless as he proceeded.

"You're all right as you are! It's clear sentiment, sir!" Mr. Chick pronounced the word sentiment with a hiss signifying that what it represented could but be the contempt of everybody. "It's all sentiment, sir, this tomfoolery about your faults. You're a big gun—that's all there is about it; and it's no 'fault.' You didn't take the notion naturally, either. I can see"—here Mr. Chick half closed his eyes, as men may be observed to do when they propose to look through and through things otherwise occult and impenetrable—"that somebody's been at work on you. I wonder they hadn't begun it before. They're jealous, and want to get you out and themselves in—"

"No, no!" burst in Leo. "It wasn't that!"

"It wasn't anything else but that!" said the strictly business man. "We've been expecting dissatisfaction and some snare, and here it is; but I'll put a quick stop to their little game. I won't *have* you interfered with and picked upon!" Here Mr. Chick showed a gleam of such decisive and imperious will as Leo had not supposed him possessed of. "You are invaluable, sir, to this establishment, and I will teach them, once for all, to respect your position, and to let you alone. That party that's been meddling, sir, will be invited to leave."

"It wasn't meant at all as you think! She was only telling me for my good."

"Well, I'll tell her something, then, for *my* good. My establishment is growing, and there's got to be some leader recognized here. Who is the party?"

"I will not tell."

Mr. Chick looked at Leo, and his face loosened into a smile.

"You take everything so confoundedly to heart! I never saw anything like it. All I want is to set you up where their envy can't touch you; and it's best to do it short off and forever. Otherwise they'll keep at it. They know you're what I've called you time and again — foolishly conscientious; and somebody — I want to find out who — has been taking advantage of it."

"I can't tell you — I wouldn't; for I know she hadn't any such reason as you speak of."

"Well," said Mr. Chick lightly, seeing that Leo was in earnest, and not choosing to quarrel with one so necessary to his convenience, — "never mind! Perhaps it would be a little severe to discharge anybody for the first offence — I suspect Miss Pratt; but I will for the second, and I'll notify all of them to that effect; and then we'll see!" (Another gleam of majesty in Mr. Chick.) "Moreover, I'm going to have it understood from this time that you're forewoman — not assistant. That'll show them about how much they've done towards getting you out and themselves in." (Mr. Chick towered.)

Thankful at being able to save little Miss Pratt, and rather stunned by this first sight of a lofty spirit in her employer, Leo retired in some consternation to collect her thoughts.

"How formidable Mr. Chick's wrath would be," she soliloquized, "if he should really let it out! I don't believe he always had this disposition. So different from what he was when I first knew him! What can have got possession of him? What's changing him? Or is it only for to-day? Perhaps it's because the shop is growing so fast, and there's so much more, every week, for us to think about and do; — and Mrs. Chick, on account of the twins, not to come in again."

Ransacking for an explanation of the new, strange lordliness — though not manifested toward herself —

showing through the proprietor's manner, Leo did not once think that possibly it was the result of his rapid business success and general prosperity and good-fortune.

Mr. Chick took care to install her, according to his word, as the female head of the establishment. It was a step which he and Mrs. Chick had agreed must be taken, since family cares had made the latter a prisoner at home — cares not calculated upon by Mr. Chick in the hour when he unbosomed himself to Miss Piper, thinking it would be rather a convenient and delightful turn, a killing of two birds with one stone, just to have her add to her other office that of wife to himself. Moreover, that Leo should be made forewoman was a step which would have been taken before but for the fact that she was already virtually filling Mrs. Chick's place in the workroom, no change in her duties or manner of performing them being desired.

Mr. Chick, who had thus far kept himself as rigidly as at first from degenerating into familiarity with the "girls," brought Mrs. Chick "down" the next morning in the carriage,—he no longer walked to and from home,—to effect the announcement of Leo as her successor. Mr. Chick found it most consistent with his dignity to stand on the sidewalk opposite his sign, and smooth his horse's nose, during his conquering wife's absence upstairs, ruminating the while on making a change in the sign: "T. Chick, Clothier," would sound better than "T. Chick, Tailor." When Mrs. Chick returned, he took her "up"; that is, home.

Having thus seasonably shown the girls, including the suspected Miss Pratt, their place, by vigorously putting down their first attempt to leave it, he rather thought there would be no more trouble from that source. He little dreamed, mistaken man! that those same girls—though perhaps not in every instance free from a little

human discontent at seeing the very youngest of them, and a late comer, more valued than themselves — were far from having the slightest inkling that they had ever left their place or were now being pushed back into it; little dreamed that they were happily relieved in knowing that the sharp and bustling Mrs. Chick had gathered up and taken away her work-apron and some other belongings, withdrawing entirely and permanently to the domestic side of Mr. Chick's life.

Leo's management, so unlike hers, was, in spite of the slight envy which her youth and capability may have stirred, not a little liked. The first principle of Mrs. Chick's method was to drive others: of Leo's, to drive herself. This radical difference alone was sufficient to render the latter's rule grateful.

The Saturday night following her installation as head, Leo was paid more than her usual wages, and undertook to have the mistake rectified; but Mr. Chick declared, with narrowing eyes and loud breathing, that there was no mistake — this was the amount he wanted to pay her hereafter. He would hear no objection. "I know what I'm about," he said,—a statement which his associates in trade were, of late, not likely to dispute.

Mr. Chick meant, now that his wife had gone irrevocably into retirement, to make a perfectly sure thing of keeping Leo, by paying her more than her modesty would have demanded, though no more than the same ability would receive elsewhere.

"How many blessings come to me," Leo exclaimed to herself, "and how vigilant I ought to be not to abuse them!"

In the weeks that followed before she was to be confirmed, her self-examination with reference to the failing which Miss Pratt had first discovered to her astonished eyes did not flag. She must not allow Mr. Chick's insen-

sibility to its existence to soothe her into carelessness about it. She was obliged to admit that, in respect to the work, he was wise in desiring her to continue as she had begun; but perhaps there was not the same certainty that she ought to persist in the line of that independent and obnoxious decision which she had made in regard to retaining Jack in intimate association.

She pondered that matter continually. Was it vanity, was it self-love, was it willfulness, which was directing her? "Oh, cleanse Thou me from my *secret* sins!" was the frequent mental ejaculation of this sincere soul, now entered into its first serious struggle to compel conviction to give way to authority—the struggle of a naturally strong and independent character to possess itself of the virtues of the weak. But that it would be wrong, despicable, for her to discard Jack's friendship she was positive. Turn the subject as she would, that side was always prominently in view; but then, here she was, just as Miss Pratt said, esteeming her own judgment!

Leo would long ago have carried her trouble to Mr. Thayer, but for one possibility: If he should decide against Jack, could she do what even Mr. Thayer thought proper, if God, through her own moral feelings, were always whispering against it? Though half suspecting that here was the very place where the devil was most cunningly deceiving her by representing as moral feeling what was proud self-confidence, Leo had not yet brought herself to think she could. Only God's help, then, must now be sought. All genuine prayer is a power working strongly on him who prays. Fiercer and fiercer grew the contest in Leo. The bishop's visit was drawing near, and still the Divine Hand failed to point out her error.

Now the cheering thought occurred to her that if she could not "take" Mr. Thayer's advice, as Miss Pratt would so quickly have done, she could at least hear it.

She could tell him all the difficulty, including the point that she could not yet follow the conclusions of another, not even his, if at variance with her own sense of justice.

This she had decided to do; for the change in her mother, yielding to no gentle advances, not even to the cry for forgiveness which had finally burst from Leo's full heart, was pressing her into this course with all the urgency which rebukeful reserve, in no hurry to restore sunshine, can bring to bear on a sensitive and unbelligerent nature.

Not that Mrs. Dayne refused to forgive her daughter.

"Oh, yes! Certainly I will forgive you," she had said unmovedly. "You need have no fear on that ground."

Then she continued to behave precisely as before. That coldness so afflictive to Leo, though scrupulously relegated to the shadowy nothings too fine to be seen though not too light to be felt, still held unbroken sway.

In nothing, perhaps, was it more uncomfortably manifested than in the new exactness with which the mother performed services for her daughter. Formerly careless of Leo's comfort, she now showed to her duteous attentions painfully distressing to the deprecating recipient of them, upon whom they smote as the knell of love. In the place of affection, which is often more inconsiderate of its beloved than is hireling labor of its master, her mother was putting the formal works of duty.

Leo planned to see Mr. Thayer on a certain evening, by leaving word at home and telling Jack not to wait. On Jack, however, her word produced no effect except to make him declare that he should have an errand to Brackton after supper, and so would stay there till she came from the rectory.

It so happened that on this particular day Miss Pratt, whose mind had probably been all this time incubating, presented for Leo's contemplation the full-fledged result

of the process. Being in profoundest ignorance of the circumstance that Mr. Chick had shown her her place, she hesitated not to step innocently forth over the line which he imagined it had greatly humiliated her to see him draw as the circumscription of her liberty.

Taking her usual noon opportunity, Miss Pratt approached her subject by making the somewhat incredible statement, "I've been thinking."

Leo, not suspecting that the theme of her friend's mental operations was likely to have been the one so offensive to Mr. Chick, encouraged, as always, the rather weak and sometimes slighted little woman to express herself. When Miss Pratt did so, however, her words produced an effect, in one respect at least, unlike that which had followed her previous exhortation. This time she made no blunder that could call out laughter. Rather, Leo heard with a stricken, dismayed face.

Never till now had a gleam of that aspect of her connection with Follansbee which Miss Pratt saw shown itself to her. The spinster said, "If you insist on havin' Jack Follansbee round you because you think you ought to, it'll be likely to bring reproach on the Church."

So startling was this new phase of her trouble that Leo perceived it almost with a cry.

"Reproach on the Church!" she repeated; and she went away by herself.

How differently from this she had been looking upon it — how selfishly! she reflected. Perhaps her real quality was being shown her — faults so secret that, alone, she never could have discovered them. How differently, too, she must speak to Mr. Thayer from what she had intended! How changed it all looked under this new light!

Her former fearlessness about entering the Church — the fearlessness of a clear conscience — now appeared as



only another evidence of self-esteem so complete as to be utterly unconscious. All through she had thought only of what the Church was bringing to her—help and blessing: never once of what she was carrying to the Church—a damaged name. She had known that all suspicion against Jack and herself was false, and had thought this enough. Now she blushed hotly to think that she had not before considered the other side of the case.

What if Mr. Thayer, too, had thought as Miss Pratt did! But no, he could not; for if so, no reluctance to inflicting pain would have prevented him, whose first duty was to the Church, from discouraging her entrance into it. Perhaps—and Leo had often wondered about this—he did not know of Jack and the shadow. So much the more reason, then, why he should be told.

Mr. Chick's forewoman, working excitedly, could hardly wait for the day to be over, so anxious was she now to see Mr. Thayer and withhold nothing. She would make a clean breast of it. A hundred times she repeated mentally her story, always careful to defend good Jack and extravagantly upbraiding her own thoughtlessness of the Church's good. She had made up her mind to propose to Mr. Thayer that her confirmation should be postponed. She would await a solution of her troubles.

Even now, that was all she could do. Not even to please Mr. Thayer would she be able to step over the line cut by the inward monitor, and leave Jack standing deserted while she moved triumphantly away in the company of the very friends he had unselfishly urged her to seek and keep. She would sooner lose all those friends herself.

How soothing the rectory atmosphere always was! No disturbance of any sort seemed ever to enter here. Its dim, still, orderly rooms, pervaded by this tranquil air of

theirs, were like a cool, shady retreat where the traveler from the dusty summer highway might repose and refresh himself. Here, influenced by the spirit of the place, all one's worriment, which had appeared so grievous and so unchangeable, began to look foolish and unnecessary. Why should not, why could not, one always have such peace as was here? Leo, sitting in the book-lined room, waiting for Mr. Thayer, felt anew that she could and would. She would always remember that earthly distresses are temporal and not worthy to excite extreme perturbation.

The rector listened without one interruption to all that she had to say; and she spared nothing, either of her own or the family experience in Utopia. As she went on with her own special story and he continued to receive it so quietly, she became uncertain what impression she was making. A sick feeling of apprehension that he, even he, might doubt her, might suspect her, affected her as lack of sympathy usually does any one — checking the ready flow of her speech and leaving her stammering and impotent. One seldom talks effectively who feels that his words are finding no lodgment in his listener.

When Mr. Thayer spoke, however, he made it clear that it was not lack of sympathy which had caused his silence. He had such a different way of looking at things, that was all! His life had been one of the smooth lives. He was regularly brought up and regularly educated; regularly chose the ministry and was regularly ordained; regularly married — his invalid wife, to whom he was very devoted, was somewhere in the mysterious regions upstairs; and he had lived regularly and in good circumstances always.

Having himself dwelt on a prairie, the good man had hard work to believe in mountains and volcanoes. All the winds that had blown upon him had been rather

balmy winds and done him no harm in the world, unless to make him skeptical concerning the occurrence of whirlwinds and tornadoes; but perhaps it is well for the more severely beaten that some receive soft usage, being not too sorely scourged to leave intact their untried faith in a hovering Tenderness behind the blow.

Leo listened without interruption to what Mr. Thayer had to say, even as he had listened to her.

"Your case does not strike me," he said, "as having anything in it at all alarming. Do you not think"—here he glanced with a slightly playful air at his troubled parishioner—"that you have been working too hard, and so have become unstrung and morbid? But I do not want to underrate your sorrows, nor any one's, and I am glad, very glad, you have told them. It will be a relief to you; and, besides, I always like to have the confidence of my people, especially of the young.

"Still, this really does not appear to me to be any such matter as you seem to consider it," he went on. "There are many little unpleasantnesses arising in every life. If one only be trying to do right, one can but let these alone, and wait patiently for them to be removed. One should hold on his way, and leave the event with God.

"So far as I can see," he said, "there is nothing for you to do. Often, in our anxieties, we want to do too much, more than God asks or desires us to. We are apt to forget that He is always ruling and overruling. We want to clear up complications at once, set everything to running smoothly, while God may want us only to keep on calmly and uncomplainingly doing the things that seem good, and let Him take care of the rest.

"There is great wisdom, I think," the rector continued, "in *waiting* on the Lord—not, so to speak, wresting His work out of His hand. I hope you will take this view. I should be very sorry to have your confirmation de-

ferred—I think, indeed, that it would be wrong. It would be doing an immediate, positive harm, for the sake of avoiding a merely anticipated, uncertain one. It is generally well—I will repeat it—to let a trouble or perplexity alone, unless one has wronged another. In that case, there must, of course, be an acknowledgment, and, where the circumstances admit of it, a restitution. I suspect”—here the rector cast another pleasant glance at his visitor—“that you question the sagacity of that respectable adage about crossing bridges before they are reached.

“As it looks to me, your situation is this: You have done, and are doing, that, and that only, which you can conscientiously do, so long as your mother makes the stipulation that you shall use your own will; and you are asking whether you ought not to defer one unmistakable duty—your confirmation—until another—that of rejecting Mr. Follansbee’s friendship—is shown you. It will be time enough to do that other when it is clearly seen to be a duty. In the meantime continue stepping forward, doing the duty that is presented.”

With such words did the unruffled rector soothe Leo, and assure her, as indeed, by the very atmosphere of his room, she had begun to be assured before he came in, that, after all, this conflict of hers was not so great a matter. His placid and reposeful nature was, compared with the intense and solicitous one it was directing, as the serene-eyed stone lighthouse to the quivering ship that feels the clutch of a thousand waves. His composed way of viewing everything, his contented acceptance of the fact that time and patience are often needed to clear away difficulties, affected Leo with something of the same temper. Why, she asked herself, had she ever become so wrought up? Why had she not before had trust in God and endurance to wait?

It was, therefore, a lightened and inspirited heart that Jack met when Leo came out of the rectory — for he was watching from some convenient cover, and soon joined her. Never before had she spoken so eloquently of the Church, so gratefully of what it was to her; but when, as had so often been the case, she urged him to go, just once at least, to hear Mr. Thayer preach, Jack became sheepish and evasive, so that she concluded one of the things she must learn to wait for was the coming in him of any interest in things of the Church.

Just then she suddenly remembered that the minister had not said whether he before knew anything of what she had told him about Jack and herself. Well, it made no difference.

So it came to pass that Leo joined two societies.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### RESULTS OF A HOUSEKEEPER'S POLICY.

THENCEFORWARD for a time Leo, that member of the Dayne family whom inimical circumstances, it had seemed, were fatefully surrounding, had a life which, at least as viewed from the outside, flowed rather peacefully.

Not that quite every trace of the shadow on her own and the family name had disappeared. In Utopia especially she was sometimes reminded of the circumstance that lively suspicions had once existed against herself. This still had the same benumbing effect as at first, causing her to pass dumbly and shrinkingly in and out of the neighborhood; but her zeal as a Christian did away, for the most part, with these people's remembrance of that former time. She was full of hope as to finally overcoming all such lingering memories, and standing cleared — perfectly cleared — in everybody's thought. Besides, she was happy in the church, in her daily work, and in the advancement she was making under the direction of the Brackton Literary and Educational Society.

Not that the shadow, faint and far withdrawn as it now was, never affected her outside of Utopia. It did — a little — sometimes; like the rustling of a quick snake in the grass; gone, and no trace; forgotten: but coming again — at a distance — for an instant; gone again; forgotten, because she knew she was living in integrity.

Then, too, there was another great reason why she was able to resist melancholy on the score of the shadow —

because she had gradually become *used* to it. Nevertheless, it was setting its indelible mark upon her. Years were passing, and, in spite of the degree of happiness she now enjoyed, being under its influence so long had tinged her manner with a sadness which could not escape the keen reader of humanity.

In time the mother's bitterness had worn off considerably, as she found that Follansbee's retention had not much acted upon their fortunes. Though still at enmity with many, she had, on the whole, less open unpleasantness with these than formerly.

At the New England Machine, also, Time was working such wonders as he is accustomed to perform elsewhere. Their shopmates had become more acquainted with Luke and Seth Dayne, and saw them to be good-enough fellows, after all; and Mr. Brackett, well aware that this world must be taken as it was found, never neglected, when he chanced to come to Utopia, to "declare" whatever he knew that was to the advantage of them all.

Leo had tried to persuade her brothers to go to church with her, and they had been once, but, like her mother, could never be induced to repeat the visit. Seth very unwillingly, and only after long resistance, assigned his reasons.

"I don't want to hurt your feelings, sis," he urged deprecatingly, "for I don't question, mind you, their being Christians; and that's all 't's needed. And I know we" (meaning the Methodists) "came from them; and I know their beliefs about the same as the rest o' the churches have; and I know that church is old and historical. All I'm saying is, I ain't used to their ways; and I'd rather go where I am used to the ways. Their ways—though, as I say, I don't want to hurt your feelings, and I'm glad to have you go there—are" (here, without knowing it, Seth looked so solemn, and so pained

in remembrance of his one ritualistic experience, that he was very comical), "to me, you know, a-w-w-ful lengthy. But as long as people are Christians, it's all right."

So, as their minds and prospects became more settled, Mrs. Dayne and her sons had fallen into the old family habit of going to church—a church in Brackton, and, by the way, the identical one that Miss Pratt attended. It was of the same denomination as the white, blinking little meeting-house whose clanging bell still disturbed the noontide quiet at home, but not the repose of the husband and father lying within its hearing, whose slumber it as little annoyed as on the memorable day when he slept in a chair and not in a coffin.

Occasional letters came from uncle Hugh, who was married now and building a new house, and from Mr. Small, who had at length succeeded in his heart's desire of purchasing a property of which, as a financiering tactician of phenomenal abilities, he thought but slightly; and once or twice Mrs. Dayne had been back on a brief visit of business, and once to her mother's funeral.

What it is to a girl—a woman—to be filled with love which no one wants, perhaps only she herself knows. The yearning heart of affection in Leo was asserting itself more and more, secretly crying more and more pitifully for its natural right, its supplementary heart,—for this is a need too close to nature not to make itself mightily felt; but her life was bare—bare—of love. No expression of it ever fell from her mother's lips, and Seth and Luke were undemonstrative men. So this fond spirit beat hungrily, day after day and year after year, round the insensate wall of uncongenial circumstances.

Yet she did and would love, and show her love to Seth, to Luke, to her mother, as much as she dared; for the woman in her was driving her hardly. Sometimes Seth



looked tenderly at her, and she almost thought, at those times, he liked her little foolish ways better than he said; and once when, for fun, she hid behind the door, and he thought she had gone out for the evening, it quite thrilled her to hear him speak as he did, saying, "It's too lonesome without her!" But these were rare oases in the desert.

Meantime, she sewed, and studied, and walked home at night with Jack,—her dreary loneliness always tugging more or less heavily at her. Sometimes she was fain to cry out to her mother—tell her of all the craving of her heart, and of all its poverty; but invariably the word died unspoken. That impassive woman, so dead to the needs of that other woman to whom she had given life, but not the true food of life,—Leo could not make her, at the other side of the great gulf of dissimilarity between them, hear her signal. Her mother would be deaf as a stone to her appeal.

Mrs. Dayne did not understand Leo any more than a cube of marble understands a throb of pain. No, there was no help in her mother. If she had confided in her in this matter, her mother would either have treated her as very weak, and have shown her that she had exposed her heart only to have it smiled at, or else would have said a few indifferent words, and then forgotten the subject and proceeded to talk on some other as though nothing had happened. One or the other of these rewards was generally what the daughter received for any confidence.

So the days went on; and so, of course,—though Leo half suspected her longing for human love was sinful, and that she ought to be entirely satisfied with God's love,—the heart-starving went on. It was natural, now, that she should think of the possibility of Jack becoming her lover; and she did. Sometimes, though always when out

of his presence, she acknowledged an impulse toward him; but no sooner did she come again into it than she knew that he never could be to her that nearer and dearer friend whom she needed. Something made it impossible. Those lips of his were not the ones for hers to touch, save in a dream. Seen, they were too red, too ripe, too — was it lustful?

Moreover, this conviction, especially powerful when any of Jack's little effeminate ways jarred upon or half nauseated her stronger nature, must have found unconscious expression in spite of her determination always to like him and adhere to him. At any rate, Jack, who was not without intuition, had thus far divined too accurately what his standing with her was to venture out of his concealment.

Poor Jack could still see a reason why he should wait longer, if it were only the fanciful one that Leo, on account of her prosperity, was beyond his reach, at least until his own circumstances should be a little improved; for somehow his position at the New England Machine was about what it had been.

"Of what use is it," he said, "to make any effort to rise there, when that young snob is ahead of me?"

Effort is success; but Jack did not know that. To be struggling to our utmost to go forward all along the line is to be in a very high condition, entirely apart from the question of what we are accomplishing; but Jack did not know that: and it was a trial to have the young snob ahead of him.

Again, though frequently re-resolving to do so, Jack had never quite effected that change to a new boarding-place, and to self-supporting independence, which he had contemplated. He was not loving Leo less, nor losing his purpose of marrying her. In some directions this weak man had uncommon persistence. But the absence —

thus far—of rivals (when it is Summer we are apt to think it always will be), and his cautious desire not to spoil his ultimate prospects by unwise precipitancy, lulled him in this long procrastination.

He was careful, too, to be making a kind of headway in his suit. The more he failed of getting nearer to Leo, the more pains he took to have his name associated with hers. He delighted to be seen with her, and when he knew that they were observed said to himself, "There! That's a wind in my favor!"

It spoke well for the quality of Jack's love that Leo was but a plain woman with plain accessories, and that through her he gained no pecuniary advantages and received no gratifications of sense. It showed that he had, this time, been touched by something other than attractions of person or toilet—was held by something other than that his negligent convenience was served or his vehement passions pleased. It showed that he had not, this time, had so much regard to any of these things as to traits of character. Besides, he did not, and could not, this time, think of transferring his love—it was centered steadfastly on one.

In the meantime Leo's sense of a great lack in her internal life was increased by the lack in her external life, especially by the barren, almost desolate aspect of her home. Every year she lived nearer to her dead father, communed more deeply with his memory, appreciated him better, grew more tender and pitying in her thought of him, missed him more. Every year she was seeing with new eyes how much he had been to them all, how much he had suffered, how much of the trimness in their old surroundings had resulted from the struggles of his spirit and the labors of his hands,—for we, like our ghost, may be best discerned after we are dead. Gazing at his picture, she would whisper, "I know all now, father,—I know."

It had not taken long for all outward traces of his influence to depart from the Dayne home. Now, unfortunate furniture was not mended, defacements were not hidden, and ruined articles that could be dispensed with were not replaced. In fact, Mrs. Dayne, left to herself, showed so unsystematic a temperament that one wondered if she drew even her breath regularly. If defects were pointed out and she undertook improvements, she did her work so ill that the result was a worse affliction than what she removed; for you may as well undertake to revivify a corpse by breathing upon it your own warm breath, as by words or instructions to invest a person with qualities or capabilities of which his nature has not the germs.

The mother's household management was — not to manage; her policy was — to save money. She had that rugged energy of hers in bare working, but no faculty for embellishing life. All that, it seemed, had been done, or secured, by the father.

Leo, with precisely his exactness, and subject to the same sharp annoyance from the sight of slackness and confusion, had found all the efforts vain which the other demands upon her time permitted her to make toward staying the dilapidation that was overspreading everything. Her busy hands, always employed in every possible spare moment in trying to mend or save from complete destruction or offensiveness some part of the household equipment, could not, alone, stem the overwhelming flood. Speaking not only did no good, but, on the contrary, rendered her mother, and through her the others, unhappy. Wider and wider grew the gap between Leo's ideal of home and the reality.

Well, she must try to be patient — there was nothing else to be done.

She often questioned whether Seth — whom, though he

never now made any sign of discontent, it was somehow getting natural to think of as "poor" Seth — was vexed as she was by their condition in the house. Perhaps he too was thinking how easily his mother, if she only took an interest, might effect a transformation there; and the thought that possibly her "poor" big brother was hiding under his imperturbability the same discontent and mortification that she felt, and was, like her, striving so to occupy himself with higher enjoyments as not to notice this absence of order and comfort, helped Leo to suppress murmurs.

Seth, in turn, was similarly watching her. So these two, seeking each in his own way strength for his strait, were perhaps coming to perceive each other more truly since the haze and crudities of childhood had somewhat departed.

But to Leo's trials was added one in which her brothers could have but a comparatively small share. Her personal appearance was still affected by her mother's rule as theirs could not be. She was not a Gorgon now, any more than when she made her entrance into her new existence clad in the funereal shawl and other pensive draperies suggested by her mother's taste. Few, however, possess charms so great as to place them above the need of appropriate attire. Certainly Leo did not; but her clothing was scarcely more abundant or becoming now than at the time when we first made her acquaintance. Still obediently yielding — at the last — to her mother's wishes in all points, she had exerted herself as uselessly to remedy this as to stop the general advance of shabbiness.

She was youthful and a woman, and, besides, had discovered the easily discoverable fact that, other things being equal, a well-dressed existence, passed in boots not at all run over at the heel, somehow looks morally supe-

rior. She did not want showy nor expensive apparel, being true enough to her training to consider it frivolous to think overmuch of such things; but she did want suitable and seasonable dress. This she never had. Her weather-beaten and sun-faded garments she could hardly keep mended; and her mother, who still held determined charge of her wardrobe and her earnings, seemed never to know that the daughter had need of anything.

In the bright mornings, especially the spring mornings, Leo wished she could put on fresh raiment proper to the time — in the morning, because morning is the youth of day, and then it is that such cravings are strongest. Sometimes she expressed this wish, perhaps when she took her skirt from a chair where it had been hung over night to dry out of it yesterday's mud and rain, and tried to stretch straight its shrunken braid and brush away its stains; for she generally enjoyed that freedom from perplexity as to what she should wear which is known only to such as have but one thing fit — unless it be something a little more decent for Sunday.

Leo's words, however, worked but little good. Mrs. Dayne would see not the large fact that her daughter was almost completely destitute, but only that the old braid should be replaced or some frayed spots repaired. Having done so much, she reposed in the thought that she had done all.

Whenever Leo suggested that her mother should have help in sewing, or hinted that ready-made garments would be acceptable to her, she was always sorry; for, however carefully she proceeded, she invariably made her mother quite miserable with the notion that she was complaining; and this was all it accomplished, though her mother answered, "Yes, yes, Leo," to everything — with a manner that said, "Unreasonable and cruel as you are, I, your mother, choose to lie down and be stepped on, to satisfy you."

Once, however, Mrs. Dayne was otherwise moved by Leo's "complaints." She went secretly and bought an expensive silk of which Leo had no sort of need, thus showing how hopeless it was to make her understand what was really wanted. The silk was with difficulty exchanged for household linen.

These were certainly the only times when Mrs. Dayne ever justified the idea that she took any interest whatever in "Leo's sewing." Moreover the thought of being superseded in any measure, even by Leo herself, was found to be so distressing to her, in view of having always done "Leo's sewing," that Leo was made to feel herself quite ungrateful, and almost hard-hearted, in wounding her mother's sensibilities, and ended by making her anxious only to soothe them and have the whole matter forgotten.

Well, Leo must try to be patient with this part, too, of the mismanagement at home. But then, was it a merit to be patient with any part of it, with unnecessary evils — unnecessary except as being her mother's will? Was it a merit to try to crush out a desire for a better condition of things for the sake of making peace with a poorer?

Patience is a dangerous virtue — one to be used with caution. Patience is liable to submit to wrongs. Patience is liable to make men content with a lot less excellent than they might win. Patience may be only lack of courage to withstand, lack of strength to prevail. There is a worthy and an unworthy patience. Leo thought of all this; but she could find no present solution for the hard discrepancy between her aspirations and her realities except this: to hold those aspirations in suspension until there came a time when they could have a peaceful realization.

Moreover, not even to Seth could she confide any of her dissatisfaction. He was already too severe toward his

mother. It would not do to increase his irritation. She must endure entirely alone.

A mistaken idea, startling to Leo, prevailed among those who knew her best, that she regarded these visible things as trifles entirely beneath consideration in view of the higher ambitions which occupied her; for she was known, at least at Mr. Chick's and to some in the church and elsewhere, as "all for study, and those things."

When Leo undertook to correct this erroneous impression (for the wisdom not to express ourselves overmuch comes only with age) — when she explained that she did care about everything, that she would like to develop symmetrically on all sides and have external things a copy of the mind's conception of excellence, her words struck idly. Mr. Chick, for his part, smiled with an indulgent vagueness signifying that he understood nothing about such high-flown sentiments.

"You'd better get off o' that strain," he said,—"this reaching all the time after something or other, I never could exactly make out what. Maybe you know what you mean and what you want."

"Of course I do!"

"You seem to have an idea of your own; but I've always noticed that, although there's such a practical side to you and you can beat the very deuce, sir, in working, still under it all you have visions of one kind or another. What you need is to eat more, and not be high-flying and killing yourself for the sake o' following out these fancies about being or doing something that nobody but yourself can see into. You ought 'o settle down more, and get an appetite for stout victuals."

"Oh, it isn't a 'strain' at all! One can bring divine principles — principles of right — into making clothes, for instance, and not make them only because that happens to be one's earthly business, — don't you see?" Leo



was solicitous to be understood, and was always making the mistake of thinking everybody able to comprehend ambitions so natural and common as hers.

But Mr. Chick only smiled still more indulgently, as ready to overlook these singular vagaries, appearing as they did in a pre-eminently smart tailoress, and a pre-eminently practical one, too.

"Well, I don't see," he persisted, "how it is that anybody so practical in work should talk so much fog. It never'd be suspected, but you're as full o' romantic notions about 'life' and 'truth' and that kind o' thing, and of useless longings after all sorts of fanciful and impossible good, as an egg is of meat."

"Neither fanciful nor impossible!" Leo expostulated.

"Well, in my belief, what you need is to be contented. You're altogether too aspiring for your own advantage. It keeps you somehow out o' your body." Mr. Chick doubted that she was aware of possessing that incumbrance. "There's no sense in being like that!" he went on. "So long as we're on the earth, we'd better stay here in peace. It'll be soon enough to begin to live in the clouds, and think about glory, when we get through here. One world at a time, please, for me!"

It was of no use to protest ever so earnestly that these thoughts and feelings were not visionary—that they looked to use in this world as well as in every possible world—that they had to do with what was real and eternal. Mr. Chick could not fathom the matter.

"There it is!" he cried. "'Eternal'! Who knows anything about 'eternal'? Wait till you're there. You're getting ahead o' the season; you're anticipating. The only time you're sure of is now. Pin yourself down to that. Take the use of the present—and the comfort. That's the way to live, woman, and not be getting big-eyed with staying up in a balloon"—and here Mr. Chick

turned up his eyes and sang with much comicality an adapted ditty of the street, of which his last words had reminded him :

“Up in a balloon, boys, up in a balloon,  
All among the little stars, sailing round the moon !  
Up in a balloon, boys, up in a balloon,—  
It's something very [silly] to be up in a balloon ! ”

Mr. Chick, then, must be suffered to retain his view of Leo's mental fallacies—a thing which she could the more easily permit him to do because aware that his droll railleries were half nonsense, and that he was somewhat actuated, moreover, in his good-natured criticisms of her supermundane tendencies by apprehension for her physical well-being.

“Your horses are too fast for your carriage. They'll smash it all to pieces for you, one o' these days, if you're not careful,” he would say, when he saw some new manifestation of her eagerness; but she, still in the unrestrainable stage of youth, before disappointment and weariness had taught the wings of her courage to flag, saw no danger, because she felt no decline.

But it was with many misgivings that she made up her mind to be quiet under the afflictions at home. She could not help wishing to have about her the beauty of method and carefulness—this she had found positively; and to relinquish that inclination, if it had been possible, would have seemed to her a desecration of a good gift. The retention of it, nevertheless, proved practically incompatible with a happy resigning of its activity to the indefinite future.

So, though she held pretty steadily, as to actions, to the course which experiment seemed to have proved was the only one at all satisfactory in its actual operation,

still her oft-repeated assurances to herself that there was no other way, that she really must hold herself in check for the sake of strengthening rather than weakening the domestic tranquillity which was so much more important than what she gave up for it,—these assurances could not end her mental warfare.

Consequently, before she came into the more peaceful state of mind in which she finally took refuge, concerning both her own appearance and the general negligent aspect of the home, she passed again and again through the same vain experience with her mother, and had over and over again the same bitter battle with herself. Surely God wanted people to do the best they could with what He gave them. It was possibilities, not impossibilities, that He would require of us and for which He would hold us responsible. Surely, then, there was no harm in this better state of things which she would have—it would be but a right using of what had been vouchsafed them. And yet it could not be. She had tried so often through various means and proposals to remove the grievous deformity, and always with the same result.

Still, under the fiery provocation of constant petty vexations and hindrances arising from her mother's peculiar institutions, the question whether it was excellence to submit to remediable ills would, though put down very strongly, rise for reconsideration. Leo's bent was indomitable—she could not change it. Every day renewed the passionate instinct in her to reach for perfection in all things. Not absolute perfection, but the kind of perfection that God gives it to a man to possess—the perfection of working as hard as possible for perfection.

But each time, the slightest renewal of her old attempts to bring about reform sufficed to reinforce the lesson she thought she had learned before, but which naturally high standards and boundless faith in human

power of accomplishment were always causing her for a moment to forget—that there was no way but of submission.

“When shall I remember it once for all?” was her cry after the death of many such a late confidence.

So personal cleanliness—and cleanliness, to be sure, is a kind of elegance—was all that Leo insisted upon now, though visited by frequent returns of the old suspicion that endurance of the unsightliness and ruin at home was not so praiseworthy as to bring to pass the renovation she would fain see.

In spite, however, of adverse circumstances at home and abroad, there were still, she knew, many good possibilities open to her, if only she strained every nerve! She must do all she could, everywhere and in everything. She was not so old yet but that she could make up, in great measure, for her deficiencies, and perhaps be almost equal with those—Miss Fessenden, for instance—who had always enjoyed “advantages.”

Then, too, she had more reasons than most have why she should try hard to improve. On account of the shadow! If it were seen that she cared for things that were worthy, hard thoughts of her would not be so likely to be entertained—and, after all, it was very much to Leo what people's thoughts of her were; for the Daynes had always set a high value on recognized respectability. She would be more likely to be esteemed, and Jack to be believed in. It would be better for them all, and better for the Church.

Leo had the trait, noticeable in a few, of easily taking a great deal of blame upon herself, without weighing it. Such learn, later, to be just—to themselves as well as to others. But now she often suffered not a little in the thought that, by the decision she made on that evening when her mother had demanded either yes or no, she had

brought the family into worse repute. The remembrance of the stand she took then was heavy upon her. She remembered nothing else.

It did not occur to her, as it would had she been considering anybody's else case, to look into all the circumstances leading up to and surrounding that episode, and to derive justification from them, or even from the fact that not even now could she answer differently. She thought only of having resisted her mother's will; for the generous and self-accusing are not nice nor logical about upbraiding themselves, and are more apt to feel a pang on account of their trespasses than to think of an excuse for not feeling it.

Thus Leo's part in attracting reproach to them all was an added motive to her for not sparing effort to be something good, to grow into the respect of all. Then, too, somebody might love her sometime, and she should want to be as fit as she could for that somebody. This was another spring to intensify her exertions—an incentive not plainly recognized, yet exercising an occult dominion. Had she examined herself, and discovered any such monstrous disposition, she with her prim education concerning female modesty would have been much ashamed.

She had derived her ideas of propriety from the same source that she had her religious faith: namely, from the general sentiment around her—that it was the place of a true woman to be absorbed in virtuous occupations until, in the providence of God, some man, taking cognizance of her proper absence of matrimonial desires, should ask her to wed, when it would be excusable for her to entertain first thoughts of marriage. At least something very like this would probably have been Leo's interpretation of this article of her social creed.

But, though her mind was so straight-laced, her heart must have something to love, or to hope to love, strongly; and it helped to satisfy her to think that perhaps if she

climbed as high as she could through the studies she liked best, she was climbing toward some one who also cared for them, and who had climbed the same path before. She was desperately in need of intellectual sympathy. She imagined what she should say to and hear from a friend like this, if she had him. Sometimes such imaginings have an almost exact fulfillment.

She tried to interest Jack in her reading, and talked enthusiastically of her plans. He said "Yes" a good many times, and that he was glad to see her progressing, and that he used to be very fond of such things when he went to school, and that she must look out not to overdo. Nevertheless Jack was not sincerely interested. Leo knew it. At first, believing his professions, and supposing them to imply some active desire in himself, she introduced him to some of her books, only to discover that he was *making an effort* to follow her and be properly interested. He wanted not to be a damper to her. He saw that this was something in which she was bound up, and therefore felt his way cautiously, turning over the volumes, asking questions when he was sure of his ground, and saying "Yes," and smiling encouragingly, and ruffling up his hair in much perturbation, to fill up the blanks when he was not.

Jack was kind, and Leo valued his kindness; but that did not prevent her from knowing that this whole matter of study was wearisome to him, and that the current news was about all he read or wanted to read. Her project of having him come in on certain evenings, and read in a regular course with her and Seth and all of them, did not work well.

It was tried, however; for she was certain that they would not fail of appetite if they would only taste the flavor. The evening passed flatly enough. Leo read, because no one else would. She also chose the author, because no one else would. She began to be disconcerted

by a perception that her audience was there to please her. A sense of not being supported exercised its awkward power.

The book was by a master of poetry. Under the influence of the silent company she had suddenly relinquished all idea of anything heavier. As the perfect measures beat on, they roused her. Like a draught of wine the writer's inspiration shot warmth, and like music filled the soul with hosts of infinite longings and purposes. How glorious it was!

When she finished, Jack said, "I've always been very fond of poetry — and literature generally. That selection was unusually fine."

Mrs. Dayne was picking her front teeth with a pin, in an abstracted manner more conclusive than words to show that she did not apprehend the meaning, even if she had listened to the words.

"You know, Leo," she said, "that I never pretend to comprehend poetry. It might be good or bad, for all of me. I shouldn't know."

Seth was a clear-headed fellow in his way, but he knew more about extracting the square root than about drawing delight from the mysterious beauties of song. He understood a good thing plainly said, whether in prose or meter; but the delicate touch, the hinted simile, the glancing image, the momentary splendor that flashes for appreciative eyes round a half-dozen printed words, the subtle aroma that pervades real poetry and has strange potency to feed and strengthen him who can perceive it,—these things were not for Seth.

"I did not know," he said, addressing Leo, "that you liked poetry so well; for I suppose that is poetry," he added, with much deference to superior judgment in a matter out of his line. He had seen that her heart was in her reading, and he was too considerate to let the subject die in silence. "How does it happen?"

"I don't know; only poetry has come to be a great treasure-house to me. I don't know when it began to be; only I've found out that it is."

She said this rather sheepishly, having the feeling that she was thereby claiming superiority to her friends. So she proposed to try now something in prose. This experiment produced less embarrassment, but still was not successful enough to banish the certain conviction that these people were listening rather for the sake of being good-naturedly indulgent to her somewhat extravagant strivings after improvement than because they saw the need of setting up such an institution, or had much delight in its offices and attractions after it was set up.

She did not want to bore her friends, and therefore quietly withdrew the impetus of her zeal from the undertaking. As there was not much else to keep it alive, it faded out of existence, but not out of Jack's memory. He was chagrined at having lost a point with Leo, as he expressed it to himself. He could not be silent, but endeavored, by frequent expressions of regret that the readings were not continued, to restore himself, and gain credit for having an interest in "literatoor" which neither training nor natural taste had given him.

While knowing that he did not in the least care to have the readings for themselves, Leo gave him the praise of being willing to endure even a tedious thing for the sake of saving another the mortification of meeting with failure.

"Jack is good," Leo said inwardly; "and if he hasn't any love for those things that are so much to me, is that any reason why I should think less of him? No. He isn't to blame for having this quality left out of him; and he certainly suffers a great deprivation. I have a source of pleasure open to me that is entirely closed to him. We none of us have anything save what we have



received. I must always be mindful of that. Jack's forte is goodness, and goodness is all that God requires in His friends, and it ought to be all that I require in mine."

In this way she endeavored to level the disparities between her and Jack, and often, moved by some new manifestation of his thoughtful regard, she could have thrown her arms about him in a passion of remorseful tenderness and resolve, on account of her ingratitude in not being altogether satisfied with him, in wishing that he could talk with her about this, that, or the other thing where she wanted help, counsel, sympathy, in feeling so needy with him for a friend; but the impulse to do some such dangerous thing, which more than once sprang up quick and strong, was always overcome by two mightier powers—her early training and a fastidious shrinking from anything like personal familiarity with one whom she knew to be—there was no use in trying, at these times, not to know it, or to overlook it—in some respects her inferior.

After every such escape she was thankful, not as at deliverance from a course fraught with peril,—for this possibility had not presented itself to her,—but because Jack would have thought it so queer a proceeding. He would assuredly have suspected her of insanity, or, at the least, would have called it very undignified. Perhaps he would even have lost some of his respect for her. At all events, it would have been an improper thing, and she was glad she had withheld herself from it.

So he and she, so near to each other on opposite sides of the invisible but mighty wall reared by their own states of mind, were as yet effectually divided.

But this continued shiftless drifting in the cluttered home—where the mother's habit of dropping things where they were last used had the effect of making them

look as if they had been scattered by a puff of the devil's breath!—did it not affect even the character? Leo thought it certainly did affect her disposition.

More than once, of late, in moments when she had been made to feel more forcibly than usual, through some fresh inconvenience, how utterly unsuccessful had been all her straining to introduce into the half-dozen rooms a snug and cheerful air, and how delusive was any hope she might entertain respecting a future change in her mother's government, she had been surprised and alarmed by a sudden mighty rising in herself of an almost unrestrainable anger, such that she did not recognize it as pertaining to herself.

Hitherto she had tried chiefly to change things: now she must try only to *be* changed. She must subdue herself, at least with reference to her aspirations concerning external things; and she had discovered that there was one way to do that, at least partially, and keep herself in a sort of indifference to dust and rubbish very conducive to her mother's peace.

It was by ceasing altogether to oppose them, by falling in with the genius of her surroundings, and passing by everything unpleasant with a careless and persistent meriment which it was astonishing that her mother never suspected of having anything in it but happiness, and which consequently soothed her into still more profound obtuseness and still greater unconsciousness of deficiencies. And so it must continue to be; for if Mrs. Dayne should suspect that her daughter's contentment was only forced, what would be the use of Leo's forcing it? Yet it is not easy to sacrifice our best joyfully to one who will never know. That is devotedness too fine for most: certainly it was too fine for Leo.

So here would forever be a war, if now almost entirely a concealed one, always threatening to burst out afresh, like a treacherous unwatched enemy, when it was thought

to be pacified by a fresh treaty; for it is not easy to change the tendency one brought with him from the womb. An individual with a nice sense of fitness rarely reconciles himself with ease to the ice-cream freezer in the wood-box, or the squashes and dripping-pans in the wash-tub; and in more than one soul, even the peace of God has been subjected to fluctuation by the combinations of color in the parlor carpet.

If Seth's mind had been open to his sister, she might have beheld what would have caused her to waver much more, or even to fling wide the door of the strong-room wherein she kept locked her own personal wishes, and bid them go forth in all their might and overcome. But now she saw only that when she disregarded the disagreeable things there was more tranquillity in the house. Hence it presented itself to her as a clear duty to follow as closely as possible the path along which the urgent hands of experience at her back were pushing her; for one may question and consider as much as he please, and may even have in his hands the desperate power to reach the goal of his ardent longing, but meantime he will use that power or not — will live his common daily life — strictly according to the pointing of that fateful finger upon, which, deciding its direction, bears the delicate total of a thousand convergent considerations acknowledged as moral forces by the individual under its influence. In other words, one must act according to the temper and constitution of his being, though a looker-on may see for him an easy extrication from his difficulties.

Thus it came to pass that Leo more and more quelled herself, going through especially provoking moments in silence, and emerging beyond them glad that she had "let it all go," even if she must hurry away and moan in secret over the miserableness. This was an amiability, or patience, different from weakness.

## CHAPTER XX.

### SOME UNEXPECTED CALLERS.

IT was a summer Sunday evening, and the Church of the Intercessor held no service. The Daynes were in their best room, which the mother took pride in using "common." It happened that each was occupied in reading, there being enough daylight for that still left.

Through the open windows came the characteristic Utopian noises—perhaps not quite the full week-day orchestra of them, some of the youthful vocalists being detained within doors by parents who unhappily regarded one day above another. Immediately in front of the windows a small boy trundled back and forth a sieve instead of a hoop, and testified gratification in boisterous song.

Nevertheless, feet were heard at the door. At first nobody paid attention to this, for the exigencies of the children's play not infrequently demanded their presence on the steps of the neighborhood, and even knocking was a diversion pleasing to them when it brought some one out and his perplexed, vexed, or foolish expression at finding not even a ghost in sight could be viewed from a safe hiding-place.

But a decisive rap, "loud enough to wake the dead,"—according to Mrs. Dayne, who was startled by it,—and followed by no scampering, notified our friends that somebody was waiting to be opened unto. It was, besides, a special, resounding rap, that made them all

look at one another inquiringly. Who could it be, and on Sunday evening?

"You go, Leo," said her mother. "You're most fit." Leo had been to church in the morning, and so was, externally, in her best condition, while the boys were sitting, for greater comfort, without coats, and Mrs. Dayne wore a clean, faded calico dress, but no collar nor cuffs.

The persons, whoever they were,—for more than one strange voice was heard,—came in. Leo was very much flushed and excited. She had not been used to receiving much company, and this came so unexpectedly! And she was so destitute of that support which, say what we will, most souls of us are weak enough to be capable of deriving from properly disposed varnish and upholstery! But she ushered them, a man and a woman, into the woeful best room, and presented them by the names they had given in introducing themselves: Mr. and Mrs. Stuart (or Miss Stuart, for Leo was rather doubtful on that point), from Central Street, Brackton,—rather a long distance; a thin, little, middle-aged woman—or at least one with gray hair—and a young man. The young man had addressed the gray-haired woman as "Bertha" when he told her, in the entry, that her breastpin was unclasped.

"They have come," Leo said, "to call, and have had quite a search to find the house."

Here the young man, whose self-possession and repose made themselves felt in contrast with Leo's abashment and hurriedness, began to make explanation, not by any means in a tone of lowly apology, not dwelling excessively on the visit as an intrusion or an oddity, and not losing sight, in a hasty desire to appear rational, of the fact, clear to his own mind, that he had a right to do a singular thing if he chose, and that his hosts might think

what they pleased of it without in the least disturbing anybody's calmness but their own.

As Mr. Stuart progressed, a sickening realization came to Leo that, outside of her world, away beyond her knowledge and reach, had spread a cruel report of her, and that these people had come, in a missionary spirit, especially to her. Not that Mr. Stuart said any such thing. Far from it. A part of what he said was:

"My sister and I"—he now designated his companion as his sister—"were told by a neighbor that such a family was living here, and we thought we would seek it out. I have thought so more particularly since I knew that Miss Dayne desires education. As one of the directors of the Literary and Educational Society, I have been glad," addressing Leo, "to observe your name on our lists."

Here he directed a quick glance, of composite meaning, at Bertha, whose draperies rustled disturbedly for an instant,—a glance which, rightly interpreted, would have cleared up whatever of mystery still attached to this visit.

"I have thought," he continued, "that probably I could be of use to you. I can at least be an encourager. Perhaps I may have some books I could loan; perhaps could direct or advise you, being myself a teacher."

There was nothing said more suspicious than this; but the estimation in which one holds another hardly needs any such slow and gross agency of communication as words. Leo knew as well at that moment as she ever did afterward that Mr. Stuart and his sister had come out as to a tarnished, but not wholly lost woman, to give the aid of their friendliness, and that they seized upon her reported love of study as the instrumentality through which they were most likely to move and benefit her.

As she perceived this more fully, looking across at

them, so serene themselves; so free from extraordinary complications and entanglements themselves as to be unprepared to imagine others in extraordinary complications and entanglements; so intrenched in belief of what they had heard and unquestioningly accepted without ever thinking to probe it, yet good people too,—as all this came home to her, her heart failed. A feeling of hopelessness, desolation, despair, grasped her. This, then, was the reward of all her painstaking to establish a fair name!

It was a startling revelation. She had not realized that anybody could *really* regard her as a base character, or as ever having been that. Knowing her past as it was, she walked about within the circle of her respecting friends, disturbed by few insights into the work of good-natured gossip-mongers with constitutional or acquired inability to keep anything to themselves. She had fancied — supposed — that she was not now the subject of untrue tales, and had cheerfully taken this exemption for the beginning of that time when all would esteem her.

Now she was stepping around and contemplating her portrait on the reverse side, with nothing in view but the unsightly and inexplicable stains that had found their way through the canvas. This is the side of portraits which we are any of us liable to mistake for the front.

When Leo replied to Mr. Stuart's half-interrogative remarks, she was too much affected by the blow she had sustained to appear natural. With an almost hysterical laugh, she said — "I'm afraid you will find me less of a student than you think. All I have been able to do since I awoke to the great importance of mental training has been to take as a nucleus what little store I had, and build about it, just letting one thing lead out into another. I try to read as widely as I can, and to study a few things as thoroughly as I can,—nothing more. I shall be very

glad to profit by your experience and hints, and I cannot be too thankful for your kindness."

She had begun to revive. The consciousness that she was not what her visitors thought swelled within her. A sudden determination filled her to win the good opinion of even these — to triumph in the very teeth of prejudice and prepossession. A ferocious energy, a species of desperate mischief, took control of her, giving her a new daring in speech.

She surprised herself that evening, fearlessly giving utterance to opinions, announcing convictions, making pertinent inquiries, successfully holding her own against opposition, or felicitously making a turn which lost the passing subject in a general smile, and showed that Miss Dayne was in the mood for harmless badinage which left one in doubt as to just how far she had been serious.

This was so unlike Leo's usual deportment that her mother and brothers beheld her with amazement. To their familiar sight her appearance was positively wild and strange. Her burning cheeks, shining eyes, and confident tongue made her very different from the girl of their acquaintance — always, in strange company, diffident and backward. What was the matter with her? Was she going out of her head?

It was noticeable that Miss Stuart took but little part in the conversation. When she did speak it was generally to turn some matter over to "Roland," though once she went out of her way to state that Miss Fessenden was a friend of herself and "Roland," and Roland went out of his way not to make any response.

Miss Stuart added — "I have understood that Miss Fessenden is a friend of Miss Dayne also?"

To this Leo replied, "Oh, yes, very much so," and felt, more than before, that there was something in this visit besides what was manifest.



If Miss Stuart herself was referred to, she almost invariably referred to her brother, with, "Roland, how was it?" or, "Roland, will you explain it?" and then hung upon him with her eyes while his ready and appropriate language flowed in exposition or illustration. When he had finished, she gave out through the thousand ducts of manner an essence of perfect satisfaction in his performance, and of perfect persuasion that everybody must be impressed with him.

Indeed, Roland Stuart was a man who did impress people. He had impressed them from the time he was born, twenty-four years before, till now; and his sister, so much older than he, was only human in being proud of him. She had been proud so long!—ever since he was left with only her for mother and father.

That was when he was a little boy—a little boy with a face like the picture of some olden child-king: hair rippling back from a gleaming forehead and tumbling in heavy masses of ringlets about his shoulders—a little boy whom everybody noticed and petted for his beauty. Since then she had given all her life to him. People said she had done nobly by Roland. What a man he had grown up to be! He had escaped snares and pitfalls, and not many with parents to advance them were in better case.

Miss Stuart felt constant delight in Roland's worldly prospects. Through her unsparing pains he had entered school far ahead of his childish mates, and afterward she had supplemented the instruction he received there with all that she could bring to him of assistance and incentive, until she was left behind, unable longer even to follow, save with blind admiration, the strides of his scholarship.

To make an attractive home for "Roland" (Miss Stuart was a too exact housekeeper to bear with servants—they were her despair and she theirs), to see that

the requisitions of Roland's health and palate were met by his food, and to promote Roland's social and other interests by spreading and strengthening in every possible way the exalted notion of him that prevailed,—this was what Miss Stuart did now; and Roland was, as a rule, very happy, and meant to be very good.

Everybody was deferential to him, and somehow had been so ever since he could remember. Teachers had praised and displayed him, till it was mere matter of course. His sister had brought him up to shun the mischievous tricks and passing misdeeds of boyhood—shielding him from rough contact, without reflecting that the dangers of inexperience are as great as those of acquiring experience. Even then he had begun to be looked upon as apart from common sinners; and now he perceived that he was everywhere regarded with marked favor, mingled, in some cases, with simpering servility.

Roland was not free from self-righteousness. He did not remember that his innocence had never been much tried, and that untried innocence is no innocence. He believed of himself as others believed of him—he knew that he was good. The deference shown him seemed a suitable enough thing—it was in line with previous homages; but such homages were of no moment. Roland Stuart sincerely thought that he was above them. What was the world to him? What was ambition? What were laudations? What were possessions? He had put solicitude for these under his feet. He valued them at their true worth. Spiritual, moral, intellectual graces—these were all that he esteemed.

Such was the elevation of this young man's spirit. Therefore, instead of being in the least disquieted, as Leo's womanly feelings were, by the neighborhood, the room, the figure cut by the not at all nicely gotten up young woman on whose account, chiefly, he had come, he

was rather pleased than otherwise by them. Indeed, so far as they could be considered evidences of a proper contempt, on the part of the Daynes, for vulgar enjoyments and temporal pleasantnesses, he was entirely pleased with them.

In theory, Mr. Stuart was somewhat of an ascetic. He held that the pursuits of the life which is more than meat could be better followed in a house with bare floors and scant furniture than where much care was given to comforts of body or joys of sight. He often reproved his sister when she inquired into his wishes concerning household arrangements. He declared that she was a Martha cumbered about much serving; that such matters as she concerned herself with were perfectly indifferent to him, and that he should be much more gratified to see her devoting herself to those that were of some genuine consequence. For his part, he should like to simplify existence—have only the bare necessities as to shelter, raiment, food. Why should she be bound up in things of so slight a character? He could find no excuse for it.

Really, it was hardly peculiar that so peculiar a gentleman should make this peculiar visit.

After Roland's reprimands, Miss Stuart was always forced to take refuge in such consolation as she could draw from the reflection that he did not know what he was talking about, and that he would change his tune if he were once deprived of what he had always been so much accustomed to as not to prize. She knew it *was* an advantage to him, in spite of his not admitting the fact, to have a nice home and plenty of clean shirts. What a condition he would be in, to be sure, if she should act as he would have her!

It is quite possible to confer an unmistakable benefit—a corporal one—against the recipient's will. So it happened that Miss Stuart, with only her indulgent love for

Roland to take counsel of, kept on ministering to him as before, though she would have been more content if he had appreciated her efforts. Because he did not, she was sometimes provoked enough to hope, rather maliciously, that he would get a wife who, by contrast, would teach him a belated esteem of his sister's usefulness — provoked enough even to meditate withdrawing her attentions, at least until she brought him to his senses; but she always relented as soon as he was likely to get any of the profit supposed to accrue from correction. She could not see him inconvenienced. She flew to his rescue before he knew that anything was amiss, and, by extra penitential service, proceeded to confirm him in his uncivilized aversion to refined domestic usages.

When the visitors withdrew,—a consummation which Miss Stuart effected with some difficulty, and only by several times reminding her brother that it was getting very late and that they certainly must go,—it is safe to say they both carried away with them a somewhat different idea of the Daynes from that with which they came.

Then, they had nearly one and the same thought. Perhaps they have now. If we judge by the words of the two as they talk by the way, we may or may not ascertain; for words can be used to reveal or to conceal one's mind, or to discover another's mind. Miss Stuart was talkative, and Mr. Stuart was taciturn, as usual.

"I'm not sorry we came," said Miss Stuart. "We've found out that this girl isn't beyond help yet. She seems to take some real interest in books, and that speaks well for her. She may, in the course of time, if she perseveres, pick up quite a little culture; though it isn't to be expected that a girl who spends every day in a tailor's shop can do much. Anything like accuracy would be out of the question."

"Perhaps not," said Roland briefly.

"Well, it's creditable to be trying, even if one can't accomplish much; and Miss Dayne may become very passable on the outside. It doesn't matter if her acquirements must be seen, on acquaintance, to be very shallow. The principal thing to be thought of for her is—not learning, but salvation from her tendencies; and I was encouraged when I saw how animated she was in speaking of certain literary productions. Evidently this is her promising side, and the right place to begin with her; though, so long as she keeps up her association with that young man, what is to be hoped for?"

Miss Stuart paused, and Mr. Stuart said nothing. There was no opportunity to scrutinize him.

The next evening, after tea, Roland was standing with his back to his sister, reflectively casting his eye over the sitting-room bookcase. She watched him as his hand passed along the shelves, stopping now and then to take out a book.

"Can it be possible!" she ejaculated inwardly.

Cramming a volume into his breast pocket, where it was a very tight fit and made him look as if he had developed one angle in the process of becoming an octagonal man, he put two others under his arm, and strode, preoccupied, to the door, with the air of a man having nobody's wishes but his own to consider.

"Oh," he said suddenly, standing with the knob in his hand, "I'm going to carry these to Miss Dayne."

"What! Not so soon! Oh, don't, Roland! It was only last night we were there. It isn't proper. People will be talking about *you*, the next we know. If you should go there often, they might say the same of you that they do of that other young man."

It was an eloquent glance that Roland gave for answer—a glance that Miss Stuart read perfectly—a

glance that repeated instantly and effectively all that she had ever heard him utter in scorn of the world and of her regard for it.

"I — am — going," he said slowly, and, withdrawing a contemptuous gaze, he passed into the hall and decisively shut the door.

Roland Stuart was in the habit of having his own way. His sister had encountered his inflexible will before, and she knew that she was impotent to turn it. Strategy was her only course. But what need was there of strategy? It could not be that Roland would ever (Miss Stuart hated even to think the thought) — fall in love with that girl! But why didn't he ask her, his sister, to go with him? They always did go everywhere together.

Mr. Stuart had never paid particular court to any woman. Bertha had endeavored to fill his life, and to be in all ways a close companion to him, that the evil hour when he would inevitably contract dearer ties might be put off as long as possible. She had always known that she could not keep him forever, and she flattered herself that, being thus prepared, she should be ready to relinquish him when the time came; but then, she had always thought of his wife as a person of the right sort. And what cause, pray, had Miss Stuart — so the uneasy lady strove to reason — to be thinking otherwise than as she always had thought? Most likely Roland would laugh if he knew her fears. He wasn't quite a fool yet.

Notwithstanding her frequent reiterations of this somewhat equivocal tribute to the soundness of her brother's intellectual faculties, Miss Stuart could not find tranquillity of mind that night. What did make him go alone? Not that there was anything unaccountable, after all, in a young man like Roland taking some books to a young woman like Miss Dayne. Pshaw! It was probably all folly to be worried. Yet Miss Stuart was worried; and

she was inclined to trust presentiments as having something celestial and valid about them.

"Well," she finally concluded, "no good will come of pondering or conjecturing. All I can do is to wait and see. Perhaps it'll all prove to be nothing."

Mr. Stuart's action had thrown at least one individual besides his sister into commotion — one more firmly persuaded than she what that action augured. Before the visitor had been long in the best room that was used common, discoursing with Miss Dayne upon the books he had brought, Jack Follansbee entered familiarly. Luke and Seth were there by way of honoring their guest, Mrs. Dayne having excused herself on the ground of complexities in the kitchen; but neither the presence of the brothers, nor Mr. Stuart's numerous polite allusions to them, and to Follansbee after his arrival, could prevent the cold sinking of the latter's heart. The iron had entered his soul. Jealousy magnified every sign.

It was not to be denied that the conversation did irresistibly tend to skip the three men who had no true community with it; and it did this in spite of the hasty efforts of the two — whenever they bethought them — to generalize it. Follansbee noticed all. He knew too much to underrate his rival — come at last! So, while himself clearly perceiving that this fine gentleman was by no means faultless, and while himself fully able to point out most distinctly the chances for improvement in him, he did not foolishly expect Leo to be so acute. He was aware that women see men as men do not.

Of course Mr. Follansbee could not think there was as yet any settled intention on the part of Mr. Stuart to make love to Leo; but he was certain it would come to that. Leo had told Jack this very night, when they were coming home from work, — for he waited for her now in Summer and Winter alike, in dark and light alike, — of

the remarkable call the family had received the evening before from a Mr. and Miss Stuart. And here was the young fellow again! He was in a mighty hurry with his books! Oh, you couldn't cheat Jack Follansbee! Such things meant something, always!

Nevertheless, Jack of course hoped that these forebodings of his would prove to be worse than the reality. He could advise Leo to be cautious about encouraging the acquaintance of a stranger. He should advise her as earnestly as he could without exciting the suspicion that he was only envious of Mr. Stuart's superiority. But Jack saw now that he himself ought to have begun before to make love to her—to bind her. It had been a great mistake not to.

So he watched the two with the suspicious eye of criticism. He saw the animated faces, the innocent absorption, the repented-of forgetting that others were present. Each of these things hurt him like a knife. He sat there fascinated by the sight of what tortured him. Every moment he grew more wretched. Yet he could not go away: he must see the worst. His own silence oppressed him. Why did not he enter into the discussion that was going on, and not let that piece of affectation have the opportunity to parade himself and his pretended lore continually? All in vain Jack resolved to speak, and prepared his remark. He could not break the dumb spell that bound his tongue—so the occasions passed.

But Jack was not the only one of the company who was taking note of every slight indication. Mr. Stuart, perhaps more unconsciously than he, was making up his mind—making it up about the nature of the relation between Miss Dayne and Mr. Follansbee. He did not believe what he had heard. He could not fail to notice that quality in Leo which so amused Follansbee—her reckless unreserve. Mr. Stuart was seeing him and her



together now; and for a number of days afterward he thought a good deal about them.

"I don't believe the report! It can't be true!" he exclaimed to himself, when he recalled the incidents of that evening.

Yet, on the other hand, it might be. There was certainly something very odd in it all — an intimacy of such long standing, and not terminating in marriage.

But why should Mr. Stuart concern himself so much with this matter? He did not know why, and said so, — then continued to concern himself in the same way.

He knew before he ever saw Leo that she was connected with the Church; for could not the same secret intelligencer who conveyed to him other items of fact or hearsay tell him also this? But, though a strenuous Christian himself, he held the Church to be so corrupt that it was in many cases willing to wink at a doubtful life for the sake of increased or undiminished numbers. Hence the fact that one was of it counted for nothing with Mr. Stuart. The spiritual Church was, in his belief, a long way from being composed of the identical parties that compose the visible. It was well enough for those who were truly of the Church to unite with it. He was united with it, though quite likely he should not have been had he not taken the step before considering as deeply as he since had the advisability of declaring against so much worldliness and materiality, and in favor of a wholly inward bond with Christ.

For himself, Mr. Stuart attended divine service when he pleased, and stayed away when he pleased. Also, he attended where he pleased, not confining himself at all to the communion that claimed him. By this course he asserted his superiority to denominational lines. His cultivation and high sentiments rendered him agreeable to clergymen, while his sister's judicious public extolment

of his home traits served to brighten the romantic aureola which had somehow come to be the medium through which everybody saw Roland Stuart. As to his abilities, Bertha's oft-repeated judgment of them, which so frequently took the form of "Roland has talents" that it sometimes caused an indulgent smile to pass around, could not be dissented from.

Though far enough from being free and careless as to his associates, Mr. Stuart systematically condescended to men of low degree, never being led, however, by his desire to find a common footing with them, into anything like the familiarity of equality. Instead of degrading his converse to their level, he could, by a certain powerful reserve of his, and a kind of concentrated repressive disdain of trite remarks and small tattle, bring most people up into his range.

It happened that Mr. King and Mr. Stuart were neighbors. The vegetable pedler's substantial place was the last on the street of comely houses one of which was Mr. Stuart's home. The street was one of those that ran down the sunny front of the hill which turned a shady back on Utopia. Mr. King's domain rolled up to the summit, stopping only when it caught a glimpse of the mud and mills below.

Mr. Stuart, in his walks with his sister either for pleasure or in search of additions to his various cabinets of "specimens," botanical or other, was wont to traverse Mr. King's fields, that individual having given him unqualified and standing permission to do so. Coming across him in his yard thriftily filled with well-painted carts and utensils, and where there was always the appearance of an old buffalo robe thrown down, which only close investigation could prove to be a dog, Mr. Stuart often spoke with him on agriculture, imparting advanced views obtained from reading,—views which, however,

never induced the farmer to so much as plant a potato in a manner disrespectful to pristine customs.

Mr. King's inveterate habit of telling all he knew, to say nothing of what he did not know,—a habit now so fixed that he regarded any failure to do so as a sin of omission for which he was called upon to apologize,—received little encouragement from Mr. Stuart. His cool “A-a-h,” with an immediate reversion to other subjects, perhaps in the very midst of a setting forth of local and personal affairs which to the vegetable pedler, with nothing larger to fill his mind, or possibly with a mind not large enough to take anything else in, were of engrossing interest, informed even so obtuse a man as he that Mr. Stuart paid no heed to these things.

Not so Mr. Stuart's sister. When Mr. King chanced to fall in with her alone, and, after turning the knob, began with his usual preliminary, “Did I tell you?” and, if answered negatively, inquired again, incredulously, “*Didn't* I tell you?” as though he really could not believe he was quite so careless as that, she gave him no such check as her brother did. She liked to hear the news.

It was a great pleasure to Mr. King to surprise people—to be the first to bring intelligence. Miss Stuart being no repellent listener, he had told her, though, much to his astonishment, not till some time later than he should have done,—in fact, not till the story was almost out of date,—of Leo's “case,” and of what the “Episcopals,” represented by Roland's friend, Mr. Thayer, and Roland's and his sister's acquaintance, Miss Fessenden, were doing for it.

A young girl, lately moved into Utopia, was making a great stir over there. (So Mr. King's version had run, for when we delight to create a sensation it is natural to make that which we relate as startling as possible.) She

had got a gentleman in tow the first thing,—how was that?—and one that Mr. King rather guessed, by all accounts, another woman had some claims on. This girl—Leo Dayne, they called her—was considered an uncommonly hard customer, though the whole family were bad enough. But she was so young, you see! And the Episcopalists had got hold of her, and were trying what they could do.

But what was the true reason why Roland Stuart had at length sought out this Leo Dayne?

Miss Stuart had met Miss Fessenden more than once, and knew that Roland also had met her on several occasions. There was a time, indeed, when he had chanced to be thrown frequently into her society. He had then spoken so much of her at home that the watchful sister had suspected him of cherishing a private liking for her, and had taken in hand to satisfy herself, by indirect inquiry of those who had been present on these occasions, whether he had been observed to manifest any special partiality for the lady.

Nothing appeared save that the two had found each other entertaining conversationists. There was no particular reason to think more than this. Miss Fessenden had expressed to everybody her admiration of Mr. Stuart's attainments, and her belief that he was destined to distinguish himself.

This was all that Miss Stuart had learned; but the more she had weighed the matter and considered Miss Fessenden's recommendations, the more she had smiled upon her at chance times, and the more she had come to wish that Roland would marry her.

He would certainly marry somebody at some time—that was understood; and there was Miss Fessenden, practically all alone and with plenty of property—for even a pew-full of venerable aunts cannot last forever.

Moreover, she was a *lady*, and very pleasing, and very much thought of everywhere. All things conspired to make her and Roland just fit for each other! Really, there was no objection at all to Miss Fessenden, unless it might be that she was a trifle older than Roland.

The Fessendens were of the new city-comers in Brackton, while the Stuarts were not; and Miss Fessenden's appearance was such that Miss Stuart, herself innocent of high art in toilet, would have been thunderstruck to know that, had she married young, the lady might now quite possibly have had a daughter of suitable age to be Roland's bride.

Of course Miss Stuart would be sorry, in one sense, to have Roland marry anybody. It would be a great loss to her — would make a great change for her, but, since it must come, it was better to have all the "circumstances" attending it as agreeable as possible; and Miss Stuart was sharp enough to perceive that it was very seldom so many desirable, so few objectionable, points could be found combined in one woman and her "circumstances" as were here presented. So entirely are many governed by what lies on the surface.

This was the state of mind in which Miss Stuart had been when she repeated to her brother Mr. King's story of Leo. She had told him the story for the sole reason that Miss Fessenden figured in it as a reclaiming angel — for the sole reason that it represented her as manifesting that beauty of character without which other beauty would vainly invite Roland. When she painted his suspected flame in the rôle of savior of a sister woman, Bertha had furtively studied her brother. He had flushed, but had said nothing whatever respecting either Miss Fessenden or the case that was eliciting her religious ministrations.

Bertha was at a loss how to interpret him. As to his silence, that was nothing unusual. He talked when he

pleased, and not at other times. Even away from home he exercised this prerogative almost as freely as there, and that, too, without any seeming impropriety. He could be dumb, letting conversation pass and repass him, without either being awkward or appearing a cipher. There he sat, at such times, in the strength of perfect self-possession, invulnerable to disturbance. Perhaps he was lost in thought, perhaps he was taking philosophic or disdainful or humorous note of what went on; but, at all events, this still man was a power always felt, and able to impress himself through both silence and speech.

Mr. Stuart, however, had not been sufficiently allured by Miss Fessenden's angelic qualities, as presented by his sister, to woo her. His sister had watched, but detected no increase of his interest, though he and the lady continued to meet at intervals in Brackton's social circles. For some reason Miss Stuart had begun, just prior to the visit to the Daynes, to be uneasy. If Roland would not marry such a woman as Miss Fessenden, whom would he marry?

Looked upon as a notable young man (lucky the girl who should win him!), it could not be otherwise—and Bertha knew it—than that he should be made sensible that his attentions with a view to matrimony would be acceptable in various quarters. Still he had held himself, thus far, clear of women. He met them, conversed with them, but never had been closely acquainted with a single one save his sister. To his mind, in spite of occasional collisions with her, all good women were beautiful in their affection, their constancy, their pliability, their dependence, their devotion. It was their nature. God made them so.

Roland admired women with an admiration astonishingly indiscriminating—the admiration of a perfectly inexperienced and perfectly deluded man. And he meant to marry; but he was dallying with his fate, lingering

awhile in the enchantment of anticipation, in no special hurry to have over and past the blissful season of love-making which awaited him.

The blood that colored his cheek so delicately was the passionate blood of youth, ready to spring and leap in its live canals, like a conscious thing, at a woman's clinging glance or downy touch; but whoever, observing his personal beauty or discovering his peculiarly soft views of the other sex, dreamed that he was in some measure a beau, or weak man, showed himself capable of reading character backward. Roland prided himself on his strength of will, on his might in effecting what he willed. Ever since he had had any will it had been consulted and yielded to. Of course, in his childish days, it had sometimes been an unreasonable will. He intended, now, always to have it in line with his judgment. On that judgment he placed the firmest reliance.

It is possible that Roland felt a deeper confidence in his judgment than his sister did. At all events, she had a presentiment, just prior to this visit, that, as likely as not, her brother would be ruled in his choice of a wife by his very extraordinary and imprudent notions, if not of women, at least of their "circumstances." It was better to get so erratic a young man to do something judicious at once in the way of matrimony, before he did something preposterous.

So she had bethought her again of that case in Utopia (Mr. King had been neglecting his duty of late, or else the "case" had become too quiet for his taste), and wondered whether Miss Fessenden was still dealing with it. If so, Miss Stuart would be enabled to speak once more to Roland about it and her. A good deal of time had passed since she spoke before — nearly all the time during which Leo had been striving and gaining. But Miss Stuart had been in hopes, all the while, that Roland would see for

himself what was best for him. He did not, however, and she, being afraid to have him suspect her of match-making intentions, which he might do if she took a new tack, had fallen back on the old one, and, after inquiring of Mr. King and gleaning enough to justify her somewhat, had reminded Roland afresh of Miss Fessenden's heavenliness.

"I've just heard," she said, "that your friend still retains her hold on that case in Utopia that she took up so long ago. How persevering she must be in doing good!"

Bertha also mentioned, rather carelessly, that she believed the girl had been taken into the Church.

This time Roland had left his sister in less doubt than on the first occasion, as to the meaning of the manifestation she had noticed then. He placed clear, unembarrassed eyes on her, as though he had been awaiting just this renewal of her former attempt at management. With an expression that was a cross between contempt for her small arts and amusement at their transparency and futility, he said, raising his eyebrows and putting on a sanctimonious air which quite transformed him, making Bertha laugh outright in spite of herself,—

"Well, let us, too, go and be missionaries. That's what this example ought to teach us."

Miss Stuart was pretty well acquainted with her brother; and she had known that he meant to teach her to keep her place in respect to affairs exclusively his. She might as well try to persuade a planet to change its orbit as Roland to regard her in his marriage. She had known, too, that though his displeasure at her interference had this time happened to take only a light turn, it would be dangerous to tamper further with his wishes.

He would brook nothing more. He had given her to understand that he would take whole charge of his heart and of the bestowing of it. Any conduct of hers there-



after inconsistent with the neutrality which he expected of her would excite his harsh indignation.

Yet, she had reflected, Roland had not said anything whatever to show whether he did care for Miss Fessenden or not. No, he had steered clear of the slightest disclosure on that point. Miss Stuart had seen in this another sign of his purpose to show her that he needed no confidante nor counselor in love.

This condition of things might not last forever, but it would last so long as Roland thought necessary to impress the lesson. As to Bertha, she had before then coped enough with his will to know that the sooner she feigned to surrender to it unconditionally, the sooner would she wheel into the only position from which she could hope to hinder its proud march. In open contest with him, she was a straw in the hurricane.

Although she half worshiped her gifted brother, it had happened many a time that she had not quite agreed with the edicts of his wisdom; but she had learned to hide her real sentiments in these cases, and even to express conformity, to the end that she might the more successfully work under cover against the execution of those edicts. She had perceived, in this instance, that there was but one way thenceforth for her to call Roland's attention to Miss Fessenden — by covert scheming and apparent apathy.

She determined to take that way; but before she had had opportunity to advance far, he had proposed the excursion to Utopia, knowing what he mischievously, if not maliciously, withheld from her — that Miss Dayne was reading under the direction of the Brackton Literary and Educational Society; a fact that could be forced, though somewhat against its nature, to furnish to these Daynes at least a flimsy excuse for his gratuitous prementment of himself under their roof.

Thus the mystery of the visit becomes, like some other imposing mysteries, decidedly less mysterious when examined.

Although Miss Stuart had been uncertain whether to think this proposal of Roland's was merely a reinforcement of his rebuke, or was prompted by a real desire to come into Miss Fessenden's inner circle of action, she was yet glad. Whatever Roland's object was, the result might be what his sister wished. At any rate, it was out of the question for her to commend Miss Fessenden directly; and acquaintance with a protégée of hers would inevitably help to take the place of such commending. No matter if the protégée was not then quite so much of a reprobate as Miss Stuart had hinted. Roland would think she was; and, besides, would never find out that Miss Stuart had been aware that the girl had come to be looked upon quite differently of late.

The issue had not been altogether what Bertha had calculated upon; and here Roland had gone the second time—and so soon!

## CHAPTER XXI.

### PRECIPITANCY.

YET this was only the beginning of Miss Stuart's troubles. It grew plainer and plainer before her eyes, as the weeks went by and Roland found himself more than once under the necessity of taking books to Miss Dayne, that he *was* drifting into love with "that girl."

Oh, what should Miss Stuart do to stop it? The young man had not said a word yet to justify her wretchedness, but she knew, almost as well as if he had, that it was justified.

She went about her work, but it was all dreary. In the quiet afternoons, before Roland came home, she would drop her sewing, and, covering her face with her hands, fairly moan. If she could only speak to him, picture to him the destruction he was bringing on his and her own prospects, the astonishment which would seize people, what they would think, how he would feel to have a wife whom anybody that chose could sneer at and he not able to vindicate her! But no! Every sentence she might utter would, she knew, only draw down his derisive sarcasm upon her earthliness and lack of independent judgment in estimating worth, and confirm him in his own course.

Alone in the evening, she could only sit by her open fire, watching the tongues of flame, and listen to what they said; could only think, think, and wait to hear Roland tell her, in so many words, what his purpose was; think, think, how much she had done for this boy, how

much she had sacrificed,—and for this! think, think, how little thankful he was for it all, how little obligation he acknowledged now to consult her wishes, or even to confide in her, in this momentous matter—momentous to her as well as to him. What should she do!

Gloomy as were her forebodings, they were cheerful compared with the reality. She imagined that the calamity she saw coming was somewhat remote—that there was time for her to meditate ways and means, and possibly to hit upon some measure that would succeed in averting the evil. She had no thought that Roland would show precipitancy; and to the two who were so disturbing her—both of them particularly transparent, growing absorbed in each other, and thoughtless of criticism—there was no precipitancy. Their acquaintance had progressed so rapidly! Luke and Seth and Jack Follansbee, and even Mrs. Dayne, who in many things could be safely calculated upon to be asleep to all but the loudest signs, knew, before they themselves did, how matters were going.

Follansbee's feelings at present, and previously during the growth of the intimacy, need no exposition. He had warned Leo betimes of the danger of forming a hasty friendship with this Mr. Stuart. She had answered:

“Oh, I'm sure there's no harm in him! I'm very much prepossessed in his favor.”

So what could poor Jack say? It would have been madness for him to undertake to carry his point with a high hand—to interfere loudly with Mr. Stuart's coming, and to try to snatch Leo to himself.

He was too late. He knew it surely now.

As to Seth, he was glad for Leo's sake—glad, because this new sphere of life would be good for her and her happiness. He thought Mr. Stuart was showing his good taste in loving her. In Seth's opinion, she was no com-

mon sort of girl. That Mr. Stuart would confer any favor upon the family in choosing her, or would stoop in so doing, it never entered Seth's democratic head to suspect, and he would have repudiated the notion with vigor. As to Mrs. Dayne, she was, respecting this affair, in her sodden and satisfied humor. If Leo found a good man, her mother had no objection to her marrying—if she wanted to.

Such ideas had arisen in the minds of the lookers-on before a single syllable of love had been spoken between those most concerned, perhaps before even a definite thought of love had been entertained by them. At all events, the unconscious, or at least unavowed, lovers made rapid progress. To Leo it was like entering into a superior state of existence—this having such a friend, one able to understand her, familiar with the intellectual ground she was traversing, and with the warmest appreciation of all right effort, and readiness to assist and direct it. All her life long she had needed just this.

No wonder that on the evenings when Mr. Stuart did not come, a shade of disappointment fell over the page before her after it began to be too late to expect him—no wonder that her thought reached forward to the time when he would be there again. And when he did appear, there was always awaiting him that most thorough of welcomes—the welcome of radiant looks which his coming had brought, the welcome of a clear enjoyment of his presence.

Long before Leo would have admitted it, Mr. Stuart knew that she loved him, or would love him. He discovered it by many a tiny token. When he became fully convinced of this, it seemed to him not at all a surprising thing, nor a thing to be alarmed about, nor a thing to be changed. He had always meant to marry—had always expected some woman to love him. Why not Leo Dayne as well as another?

So he reasoned when he made the discovery. He had come, then, to see her more in her true light, and knew now that the rumors which had reached him did not even fairly represent her standing in the common estimation.

In short, Mr. Stuart knew now that Miss Dayne was an uncommonly respected young woman in many quarters; that she had only the faintest shadow on her name — principally that cast by Follansbee's pursuing figure; and moreover he knew — almost — that that shadow, however faint, did not belong there.

On this point there was no longer much doubt in his mind. Purity asserts itself — sometimes. It bears acquaintance. And every visit to Miss Dayne had strengthened his conviction that there was no unholy relation between her and Follansbee.

Acutely impressionable, Roland believed that he should *feel* Miss Dayne's guilt, if she were guilty; but, argue as he might against her, consider as he might how improbable it was that any peculiar or deep-rooted friendship bound her to Follansbee, reflect as he might that it was impossible that the derogatory reports and impressions of her could have started in the first place without fault on her part, — an argument which his sister took every opportunity she dared to force slyly upon him, — clinch it all as he might by recalling that the act of the Church of the Intercessor, in first following her so earnestly, would be, perhaps, rather unexplainable, unless it had had a strictly missionary object, — revolve these things as he might, arrange his arguments as he might, over against every unfavorable conclusion stood the plain, simple character of Leo as he had seen it, with no reasonings, no proofs, but forcing itself to be noticed, looming effective in the pathway of every thought traveling toward an adverse decision.

Roland was not a man to ask advice. He was sufficient

unto himself. Still, though convinced, as it might be said that he was, of Leo's innocence, and sure that she loved him, and willing that it should be so, he had intended, if it came in his way, to speak with Mr. Thayer about her. Not that he meant to seek that gentleman's counsel, or would have humbled the woman he could think of making his wife by asking another man's opinion of her. He was of too high a mettle, was too obedient to his fastidious instincts, to do this; but he had thought he should casually engage the clergyman in conversation concerning his Utopian parishioner — nothing more.

It was not to be. Mr. Stuart had not been in any way anxious or in a hurry about it. He had supposed there was time enough. He thought he should marry Leo sometime; but he was not at all committed yet. He told himself that he was very calm in this matter. Not that he did not love her. He did. That peculiar witchery was in his heart — this he knew; but he had control of himself. He would observe her further, and get very deeply acquainted.

To do this seemed to require a great deal of his attention. Probably he was desirous of performing the work thoroughly. If, after one visit, he made up his mind not to go again very soon, a pressing errand would somehow arise, necessitating his overlooking that resolution. Perhaps Mr. Stuart had not so perfect a control of himself as he imagined. Perhaps the brightness and the pleasure of his meetings with Leo were coming to have some control over Mr. Stuart.

He delighted to teach: Leo, to be taught; and, entirely destitute of the confidence inspired by school experience and successful competition, she was a most respectful and teachable scholar. At first Roland, accustomed to the conceit and flaw-picking of a different sort of students, had mistaken her quiet and uncaviling reception of in-

struction for indication of a timid, or uninvestigating, or credulous mind; but he had soon referred this to the right cause—her profound sense of his superiority of knowledge, and of the modesty proper to a learner at his feet.

This part of his association with Leo was very agreeable to him. Such reliance, such sincere and unenvious tributes, spoken in so many ways, through eyes, voice, and manner,—even for him, so much above praise, there was an element in this so fresh and unpremeditated praise that was delicious. Like Follansbee, he was amused and captivated by Leo's spontaneity; like him, he was fond of bringing out exhibitions of it. It was by turning questioner on the topics of her studies that he had speedily discovered her to be no passive and uninquiring receiver, but one who scrutinized what was imparted, though her perception of her own deficiencies kept her from even the slightest approach to that pretentiousness and vanity so offensive in any, especially a pupil.

Mr. Stuart formed a high opinion of her intellectual capacity, but he did not allow her to suspect it. She overvalued academic advantages, and never forgot that she had not had them. We all are apt to overvalue that of which we have been deprived. Mr. Stuart knew how often the training the lack of which she so deplored stood for nothing, how often it was hollow and deceptive, how often it was sought for show and conferred no real benefit on the unwilling or uninterested object.

In more particulars, then, than one Mr. Stuart penetrated and despised pretence and credentials. Diplomas, as well as church connections, inspired no awe, nor even respect, in him—they were no criterion of one's acquirements; capacity alone would do more to cure ignorance than prescribed doses of college classics alone: but no word of this had yet opened his lips. Leo's faith in the



efficacy of institutions of learning, and her humble hopelessness about ever equaling most of those who had enjoyed the privileges of their sacred precincts, when she was already better educated, as Roland looked upon education, than half of the regularly and more or less fruitlessly "graduated" women he knew,—these illusions of hers he had not yet seen fit to attack.

It came about rather oddly at last — their engagement. He had not intended to propose on the evening when he did propose — he had too much control of himself for that; but he had been longing to see Leo, had been lonely at home, and had been attracted toward Utopia.

Not many weeks had passed since the evening of his very first visit. It seemed not to have gone abroad that he went there so frequently. His sister knew it, but even she had no idea how far his feelings had gone in the direction of love. She dared not try much to check him, through fear of hastening the disaster she dreaded; but she was watching her opportunity to draw him unobtrusively from being so much in Miss Dayne's company. It would be safer, at any rate, for him to be kept away; though, just at this time, Miss Stuart had about made up her mind that it certainly could not be that Roland was, or ever would be, making love to that girl.

The very fact of his going so often began to appear to his sister as an evidence that she had offended him even more deeply than she thought, and that he followed his present course by way of making his reproof a long and severe one. She had known him, before this, to take as much pains for a similar purpose; and surely if it were a love fancy that took him to Leo, he would not throw himself into courtship with such unreasonable ardor. Knowing, as he did, what the girl's reputation was or had been, he would be more cautious at first. Why, on the contrary supposition, he would, at the rate he was going

on, be engaged in a month! That was a little *too* much to believe of Roland!

So Miss Stuart thought after he went out on the fateful evening—thought as she sat by the grate, in the quiet, unlighted room, and meditatively watched, as she liked to do, the red coals waste and fall. The evenings were beginning to be cool, and she enjoyed a little fire, not only for warmth, but to look at.

Notwithstanding Bertha's thoughts Roland was, that very evening, perhaps that very moment, asking Leo Dayne to be his wife!

To be sure, it was a lordly way he had of asking; but it did not offend Leo—it did not even strike her as lordly. Yet her first word set the blood in Roland's expressive face to flashing and shifting portentously. Was he to be rejected by this girl?

That was a possibility that had never occurred to him; but now, at that first word, he shut his lips and braced himself for what might follow. As we know, he had not designed to propose so soon; but ever since he came the words had been just behind his lips, ready to burst through. "Why should I delay?" he had said. "Why not tell her at once that I mean to marry her? Where is the advantage of keeping her in darkness?"

Roland wanted very much to speak. Several times he had almost spoken; but Leo was so unconscious, talking on, that somehow, after all, there had been difficulty in beginning. He was not used, like some, to making love, but he was used to commanding himself generally and others very generally, and to holding himself master of any and every situation. He was not to be scared, he said, or overcome by tremors, at the thought of offering marriage. He would permit in himself no such weakness. He was a man among men, and fully up to the demands of life; and so finally, while the murmur of conversation

below stairs came droning up, he had very steadily begun and ended :

"Miss Dayne, I have something to say to you. I love you, and want you to marry me — sometime."

There was not a particle of the sound of pleading in this, not a particle of the sound of doubt as to what answer it would receive. It hardly expected even an answer. It was an announcement, and the declaration of a wish that need only be made known. To make it known was to make answer.

No wonder, then, that a fiery wave of mortification burned its way upward over Mr. Stuart's face at Leo's first word. That word was —

"Jack !"

No wonder that Mr. Stuart's lips shut, and that he held himself in sharp suspense to hear the next.

"Oh, don't !" cried Leo, seeing what she had done. "I don't mean — I mean —"

Mr. Stuart, who was standing before her, receded a step or two, looking sternly at her.

What did this import ? he thought. Was he to be told that she preferred another to him, or — The idea crossed his mind that perhaps he was to hear a confession of guilt.

"Oh, don't leave me !" hurriedly exclaimed the very unconventional girl he was dealing with, following, and making a spasmodic movement of her arms. "Do love me ! I love you so ! I've thought about it ; but I didn't know as it would ever happen — it didn't seem as if I could ever be fit. But I wanted it to happen. Only I have to tell you about something first."

"What is it you have to tell ?" inquired Mr. Stuart coldly, beginning to get more composed, and stepping back a little further, as though he feared Leo might touch him. "You can relate your story, but"—and she re-

membered and pondered long afterward the workings of his features then as his excitement rose to its culmination—"I swear I will not love you, nor be loved by you, if you belong, or ever have belonged, to—Jack!"

Leo was not perfectly acquainted, as yet, with Mr. Stuart. Though generally calm, he was capable of sudden and almost insane suspicion and injustice. He needed to learn to be slower.

He made a long pause before speaking the last word, as though he were exasperatedly searching for a term to convey all his consummate loathing and disdain. At length, designedly quoting Leo's familiar use of Follansbee's name, and putting into it a distillation of hissing and reproach, he spat it, so to say, upon her, and then stood looking contemptuously at her, covered, to his eye, with the filth which her connection with that name implied.

Truly, Jack's footsteps were sounding through her years.

This was naturally the first manifestation Leo had seen of bitterness—ferocity, one would almost call it—in Mr. Stuart; but she did not think to criticise his temper, nor to blame him for jumping at conclusions and treating her harshly. Rather, she thought of the reasons he had for this treatment, and of the need there was that her life and the strange appearances in it should be explained.

Loving and uncensuring, it did not occur to her to stand on her dignity and act the part of injured and indignant innocence. She only told Roland, stammeringly and brokenly, though likewise with a sensible fearlessness which comes of seeing nothing to be ashamed of in loving or in declaring love, how much she cared for him.

"But how can you care for me?—I don't understand,"

she went on. "When you are so much superior to me — so worthy to be loved — in every way; and then — of course you have heard — I have not been well spoken of always, but the things aren't true. I will tell you all about Jack, and how it is that he and I are such friends. You will like Jack when you come to know what he is. Only I don't want you to think that I forget how much you have to overlook in speaking to me of love, when there are so many women with everything in their favor who would so easily love you. But if only you will teach me, I will improve so fast, and try so hard to be deserving of your love, that is so much to me!"

She paused, alarmed now at her own boldness — at the strange, new things that she had said. It all came home then — what she had done, that her mother and brothers did not know, that perhaps she had been forward; but if there was anything she could have done to charm her lover, it was the very thing, foolish, reckless, and provident, that she had done: giving away her heart out and out, sparing nothing of its thoughts and hopes, keeping back nothing for a future lure, marring the perfection of the gift by no reservations.

Quick as a woman in some of his moods, and as much alive as a poet to beauty, moral or other, he was moved now by sight of the disposition she had shown — her uncritical acceptance of himself all in all, her undisguised satisfaction in him, her self-depreciation and conscientious bringing forward of what was against her.

All this reproved him, and made him penitent for his suspicions, as no manner of defence on her part could have done. A flood of tenderness welled in him for this sincere and gentle nature, opening itself so unreservedly and trustingly to his knowledge, and that, too, without thinking that it was doing a great deal for him, that it ought to have a great deal in return.

Leo loved him with all her might, and was so much occupied with the bliss of merely being allowed to do this that she did not think to set any value on what it was such a delight to bestow; but Roland knew — knew in these first hours — what he was winning: a sweeter spirit, a more generous love, than could be met with every day — knew it then, in spite of his pleasing persuasion that all pure women are very beautiful. He was a man attracted by no coquettish tricks, if he perceived them. The view he had of Leo's quality, of her affection for himself, now so artlessly revealed by every incidental word that the young man could but smile, howbeit with a deepened esteem for her, — these things were what could win and hold him.

Nothing could keep them apart now.

Holding each other's clinging hands, Roland heard all of Leo's story — about the village home, cornerwise across New England from Boston; about the dead father; about the boys, and what befell them; about the coming to Utopia; and then all about Jack and what had happened on his account.

Leo found it hard to tell that she had acted contrary to her mother's desires in respect to Mr. Follansbee, and was tempted to soften the fact; but, becoming strong in the feeling that, under just the same circumstances, she could not do otherwise even now, she went firmly on, withholding nothing, and repeating with special exactness and impartiality the conversation which had at last settled the controversy.

"Do you think I did wrong?" she asked anxiously.

What Mr. Stuart really thought was that she had exhibited, for one so young as she must have been then, — she was only twenty now, — a very high degree of conscientiousness and heroism in behalf of right; but his answer was cautious. He was not obliged to say all he thought.

"I do not disapprove of the course you took," he replied. "I hardly see how you could have done differently."

Glad of his leniency, she drew a breath of relief because the worst had now been disclosed.

Roland sat long receiving Leo's confidences, seeing more and more clearly into her heart, and finding explained the troublesome mysteries of her life. Time fled fast in her company, and something detained the others below stairs longer than usual. When they did come up, recalling the lovers to themselves, much had to be said. The unexpected engagement must be owned.

Not that it took many words, or indeed any, to show what had come to pass. Leo's beaming countenance alone was enough; but Mr. Stuart did not put upon it the burden of confession. He was proud to take Leo's hand and say that she was his espoused wife, and ask that they would all trust him to cherish and protect her.

How proud Leo was of him, of his grace, of his self-possession, of his — mightiness! For this is a way of women. His strength wrapped her about, she was safe and content encircled by his sheltering. This was love's beatific hour — the hour of vision and heavenly dreaming; and love has but one better hour — the hour of its survival of shock and trial, of its triumph in difficulty and mischance.

The Daynes were surprised. They had supposed this would come at some time, but not now. Seth was the first to recover himself, and appeared to be spokesman by common consent.

"There's only one thing to say," he affirmed. "We have no objection to Mr. Stuart."

Seth was particular to be comprehended on that point, and Mr. Stuart seemed to enjoy the humorous aspect of its careful elaboration; for he smiled. The young mechanic was a too unfeigned believer in human equality to

see anything absurd in the implication that they might have objections to even so desirable a match as Mr. Stuart would doubtless be considered. The latter, too, rejected the fanciful grading based on different degrees of gentility in occupation and living, yet that part of the brother's answer diverted him, howbeit he respected his hearty manliness and sound good-sense.

"The only trouble about it is the suddenness," Seth continued; "though"—hesitating, and looking fondly and slyly at Leo—"I should imagine that *one* doesn't think it is sudden, at least not sudden enough for me to offer serious opposition—perhaps?"

This drew attention to Leo, whose face flamed pitifully and made her lover come to her rescue with the smiling assertion:

"No, she does not think it too sudden, I am happy to say. Nor do I. We—she and I—are unable, I think, to perceive that it is ever too soon for two who truly love each other to declare that truth and live in the light of it. Am I not right?" he asked, referring to Leo. Of course everybody knows what Leo would think about his being right.

"And," Mr. Stuart added, "if it is thought that we are not sufficiently acquainted yet, why, the acquaintance can go on all the better now. We propose to have a long engagement, and to be very sober indeed in the future."

So these were betrothed.

It was late, very late, when Mr. Stuart reached home. Miss Stuart was in bed when her brother came in. Consequently he did not tell her that night what had occurred. He anticipated a tempest. However much his sister might desire to please him, he foresaw that she never would submit peaceably to this engagement. There would be a rising.



What were his feelings in view of this anticipation? He would have preferred, of course, to have peace; but if Bertha would rave, she must. She would become calm after a while, and know that it was best not to wear herself out moving nothing and nobody but herself.

Reflection did not cause Roland to regret that he had plighted himself at this time. There was no important reason why he should not. Walking home in the cool starlight, thinking it all over and confronting the changes which his new relation suggested, he was not at all confounded or alarmed at realizing himself thus bound before he had planned to be.

He held himself equal to doing as he pleased and rendering an account to no one. He was aware that his action would be generally esteemed rash and ill-advised; but he could bear himself serenely under that. What was it to him what people thought? He had no concern with vulgar judgments. If he, Roland Stuart, saw in Leo Dayne what caused him to love her, it was enough. He should condescend to no explanations. It was his will to choose her—that was all.

Roland was not mistaken about the effect which the great news would have upon his sister; but her amazement, horror, anger, tears, entreaties, elicited not a word from him. It was not his intention to try to reason with an excited woman. He could best communicate a sense of his impregnable determination by a silence which proclaimed that her every word was wasted breath. Perhaps he would argue with her hereafter, but not now.

The time arrived for him to take the morning train. He had purposely deferred his communication so as not to remain long with Bertha afterward. It was as well that she should have it out alone.

As he was going, he said rebukingly, "I shall not be home as usual this afternoon; and you would better not

sit up for me. I shall spend the evening with my wife that is to be; and I hope that before I come back you will have learned to be ashamed of this conduct."

That was all. Roland was gone.

Miss Stuart was impotent. She could have run after him, could have fallen at his feet, could have implored him not to kill her by marrying so. Oh, if she could only see him once more before he went again to that girl! Surely she could say something that would make him change his mind — put off — do something to get out of this tangle. Miss Stuart would not name it anything more permanent.

But she did not run after Roland, did not fall at his feet, did not implore him. She knew that the impulse was a vain one. He would spurn her and pass on, and she would return more desolate than ever. She could sit the whole day and evening through, and weep or storm or curse, just as it suited her. There would be no one to hear.

The day was changed for poor Miss Stuart. The squares of yellow sunlight on the carpet looked strange and weird to her swollen eyes. The ashes lay on the neglected hearth, and dust in the tasteful rooms. She was indifferent now to the requirements of exquisite housekeeping. Listlessly she gazed about, rocking herself monotonously in her wicker sewing-chair.

Only once did she think of any means of effective help. She would appeal to the girl herself. She would go secretly, and throw herself upon the girl's honor. She would go as a faithful friend and adviser, who, much against her will, was compelled by conscience to make disclosures about Roland and Roland's affairs which nothing else could have extorted from her.

She would tell the girl that Roland had had a great liking for a lady, and very much of a lady too; that of

late the affair had not quite prospered, as it had promised to do, but that there was no doubt but the lady loved Roland, and that great wretchedness would result to all concerned through his formation of this new tie—a thing which she, his sister, could fathom on no ground but that he misunderstood the lady's real sentiment, and was piqued into giving her a rival.

Miss Stuart could say, moreover, that she, happening to be privy to all these things, and seeing three people proceeding with their eyes shut straight into certain misery, could not rest till she had taken the only step that was possible to save them.

This scheme floated through Miss Stuart's unhappy mind. Could it be that it was impossible, by energy, by daring, to prevent the catastrophe that Roland was bringing upon himself? Oh, how she wished she had not been so sluggish in working to draw Miss Fessenden and Roland oftener into each other's company! "Oh, why didn't I try harder, before things came to such a pass!" was her frequent exclamation.

But she was obliged to abandon even the one method of repair that occurred to her. She could not trust the girl not to tell Roland all that might be said to her; or the girl might divine that Miss Stuart's own ambitious preferences had something to do with her vaunted disinterestedness. Miss Stuart was a stranger to Leo, and did not know what sort of stuff she would be dealing with in approaching her. If only she knew her well! As it was, she did not know how to "take" her. The risk was too heavy to be run.

But would Miss Stuart not shrink from such mendacity as this projected course would involve? Where a man is concerned, many women, even if having only a sister's or mother's interest, are utterly unprincipled and unscrupulous toward other women. At this moment Miss

Stuart hardly thought at all of the moral aspects of the plot. It was as though she had been suddenly confronted by a ruffian and murderous robber. Even as, under such circumstances, one might forget every consideration of honesty and multiply placid lies astonishing to himself in their readiness and plausibility, so Miss Stuart, in her vehement eagerness to ward off overwhelming disaster, easily stepped over restraints not meant, she perhaps thought, to hamper one in vital emergencies. Probably she would not have allowed that the principle "The end justifies the means" was righteous. Nevertheless, she would have followed that principle now without a moment's hesitation, a moment's scruple, a moment's conscientious rumination, and would have done it with whole-hearted art, with dire determination to compass her object; and all this with a general notion that when one was saving life, or doing things of any high import, one was temporarily exempt from the laws dominating petty occasions.

As for Roland, the more he saw of Leo, the more clearly he read her spirit, the more he loved her, and the more indignant he became at the injustice of the misconceptions under which she had suffered. Her words, unstudied as her breathing, made her untouched purity again and again as evident to him as that breathing. It moved his reverence and his passion. She, to whom such love as his was very new and very dear, and the thought of losing it plainly unendurable, looking to him now as the one to whom she had the blissful right of going for sympathy and counsel in all things, grew more and more enchanting. She had so long been storing up treasure of love which there had been no opportunity to use that now she had its accumulated riches to lavish upon him, and rejoiced to lavish them.

This continued to present itself to Roland as the very

perfection of womanly giving. The freedom with which her love was bestowed increased its value in the sight of the recipient—a result which does not always attend free giving. To him it was the very dew on the flower. Then his own preciousness to this girl from the first, which she was still too absurdly destitute of coquetry ever to think of hiding,—all these things were intensifying his affection for the woman he had chosen when he was less acquainted with her. He was proud—yes, at present—in being so much to her, and proud, too, not in secret. He never felt—what strangers were likely to think—that he condescended to Leo. Since he knew her value, he concerned himself with nobody's else thoughts, except that he insisted upon having the engagement made public, thus giving almost the finishing blow to his sister's not quite extinguished hope of saving him.

Of course the announcement created a marked sensation. Miss Fessenden congratulated him, with just enough melancholy to suggest the complimentary idea that no woman, not even her delicate self, would have been hard to win if a man sure to distinguish himself were the suitor; and, whenever she met him thereafter, greatly relaxed her maidenly shyness, as though she might, now that he was affianced, venture without danger of being misunderstood to give full utterance to her unbounded and undivided admiration of him. Perhaps merely because he did not wish to arouse jealousy in Leo, Roland never made any mention to her of his chance meetings with Miss Fessenden, nor, of course, of this flattering change in her deportment.

Those who had never heard of Leo were now told her revived story. Mr. King failed not to spread the news of Mr. Stuart's notable engagement, and this with no special malicious intent, but in simple enjoyment of the wonder he was able to excite by his sensational rendering of Leo's Utopian history.

There were very diverse opinions held as to the reasons that had led Mr. Stuart into the connection. Some thought there was no accounting for the influence that an artful girl could obtain over a deceived man; others that his pity might have been stirred, and that, seeing her struggling against odds, he was carried by religious zeal to the length of offering himself for her help; others that he must have found in her remarkable excellences.

All these views honored Mr. Stuart. No one thought of doubting that it was a laudable motive of some sort that had actuated him; and this was but just. No one who knew him and his clean life and exalted feeling could attribute his singular freak to anything ignoble. Moreover, those to whom Miss Dayne was best known saw nothing strange or incongruous in the match, and considered that Mr. Stuart could quite as properly be congratulated on his good-fortune as she on hers.

With pleasure and with pain Miss Stuart noted the tenor of these observations — with pleasure, because they were ever a compliment to Roland; with pain, because they reminded her again that he might have taken — what a wife! In short, of what a loss it was for him to throw himself away on “that girl.”

But Miss Stuart was the only one of the family in the least exercised by these comments. The other member was entirely inattentive, and absorbed in his own felicity. As was to be expected, his consciousness of ability to manage his own affairs had come effectually to his aid, and had borne him high and dry over annoyances. He was sensible of having done nothing to be ashamed of, to apologize for, or that concerned his neighbors — a mind his thorough manifestation of which was well calculated to produce in others a similar one.

He was an ardent lover, and almost every evening found him with Leo. Also, he was getting to know Mr. Chick,

through calling at the shop; for he allowed no false pride about the humbleness of Leo's occupation to rule him. He would gladly have lifted her at once out of her laborious calling; for, like Mr. Chick and Jack,—who, poor fellow! was indeed wholly supplanted now, and obliged to congratulate, and to appear to rejoice in his friend's weal,—Mr. Stuart was not without some solicitude for Leo's health; but of course she could not consent to receive her support from him now.

Therefore, partly because he agreed with her, against his will, that it would not be advisable for her to make any immediate change in her mode of life, he relinquished the thought, declaring, however, that, in view of this surrender on his part, he could not possibly take No in answer to another little proposal of his — that she should come and make a long visit to him and his sister, going from there, if she must, to her work.

Leo shrank from this proposition almost as much as from the first one. She feared something, she knew not what. There was one great objection to it, if no other: it would add to Miss Stuart's labor.

But Roland was not to be denied. Leo must go.

There was no wordiness in his insistence, but a positiveness which savored of having its origin in a conviction that he had some *rights*. And when was love's insistence disagreeable?

So Leo's scruples, urged gently lest they should wound the one she loved so dearly and wanted never to withstand,—these went for nothing. Mr. Stuart heard them, and remained silent. There was nothing worth even a reply. His mind was made up that she should go. On that point he was inexorable; and his had ever been masterful ways.

He had given up a great deal in suffering her to continue at Mr. Chick's. She ought to appreciate that, and

see herself willful and obdurate in standing out about this other matter.

He waited for her to feel what he was thinking of her, waited for her to repent of her usage of him; and she did feel it, and did repent.

Always ready to accuse herself, even when no one accused her, it was no wonder that the sight of her "beautiful" lover (for so, it must be confessed, Leo secretly characterized Mr. Stuart) grieved, if not offended, when it was only fondness for her that made him desire this visit, filled her with contrition.

So she hastened to throw herself upon his forgiveness, calling herself thankless and forgetful of his yieldings, and begging him not to be hurt by her obstinacy, because she did not mean to be unreasonable and would not be so any more.

Mr. Stuart forgave Leo's fault with heartiness. She had said the very things that he wanted her to say, the very things suitable to the circumstances. She might have argued to eternity, might have endeavored to persuade, might have caressed: all would have been of no avail. She did not know this—had used no art; but the natural prompting to take reproach upon herself and not to charge it on others had steered her safe to harbor, without even revealing the rocky point in her lover's character to which she had run so close.

Mr. Stuart could make his pardons pleasant. He did not effect this as Leo would—by declaring that there was nothing to forgive, that the offence was as if it had never been. That was not his way. He made Leo comfortable with the sense that the wrong that was, and that was still remembered, was righted now—comfortable with the sense that she had triumphed over her own wishes for the sake of himself.

Mr. Stuart was Leo's first lover, the first, at least, that



she knew anything about; and she was very, very fond of him, and very, very little inclined to be his critic. He seemed to her gloriously wise and strong and satisfying.

Nevertheless, after he had gone, the certainty that it was not best to make this visit would return.

But the arrangement was made. It could not be changed. The day was fixed. The others saw no good reason why, since Mr. Stuart was so strenuous about it, Leo should be so unwilling. She tried to be comforted in that she herself could not give any real reason why she should be reluctant. Yet reluctant she was, but tried to overcome the mysterious dread she had of doing this which Roland so desired. At the same time, her mind went on seeking some way of escape.

Miss Stuart had called once, briefly and formally, on her brother's betrothed, and had succeeded in making her as miserable as appropriate words with no heart in them can make one. She had done this in compliance with her brother's request, couched very nearly in the form of a command, and had done it in the frame in which she now did everything that he directed — that of a martyr. She always had done Roland's will, she muttered, and now she would keep on, in sheer desperation and hatefulness. He always had ordered her about: now let him continue until he made an end of her, if he wanted to. He would find her perfect, refusing nothing. Perhaps he would think of it when she was dead. But, obviously, it was not much consolation to her for present ills to muse on this future possibility. Her lips would tremble and tears overrun her eyes, as she thought it all over and bitterly realized her wrongs and powerlessness.

After Miss Stuart's call, which was made on a holiday, when Mr. Chick's place was closed, Mr. Stuart, coming later, had found Leo less cheerful than usual. She had immediately inquired whether coldness was habitual with his sister, or whether she disliked his engagement.

During the short time that had passed between its beginning and Miss Stuart's call, Leo had been too much occupied and too full of happiness to think much of that lady's relation to the matter. She had been a distant figure. Consequently her grimness on the occasion of her call awoke Leo rather rudely to the realization of her existence and probable hostility. Mr. Stuart pacified the questioner with the assurance that, although Bertha was averse to his marrying, she would soon become reconciled, and that there was no cause whatever for being distressed by her natural disinclination to resign a life-long monopoly of his interest and leisure.

Now, however, in her unaccountable shrinking from the proposed visit, Miss Stuart's state of mind struck Leo as a possible godsend, and at any rate a most excellent excuse for at least waiting until the sister felt more like uniting with Roland in the invitation. Indeed, so essential did her uniting in it now appear that Leo wondered how she could have thought of consenting to go without even thinking whether it would be agreeable to Bertha. Mr. Stuart so constantly ignored his sister that she, too, had forgotten her, or thought of her only vaguely, as a sort of pale background for him.

When Leo brought it to Roland's notice that perhaps Miss Stuart might not like to receive this visit, and told him how apprehension about it still clung to her, he declared it quite right that she should even refuse to go without an express solicitation from Bertha.

"I ought to have thought before," he said in conclusion, "that it would be awkward for you. I myself know so well that my sister will give you a becoming welcome that I had forgotten that you know nothing of the sort. I will see to it that this difficulty is removed."

The fact is, the task of causing this difficulty to be removed appeared rather a gratifying one to Mr. Stuart.

"As to your own unwillingness," he added, "that is

something for you to overcome, as being without any rational foundation."

Leo did not know that Miss Stuart's holiday call had been due to Roland's insistence. Neither, when he brought from her a politely worded note, implying satisfaction in the projected visit, did it conjure up for her the scene out of which it had come.

That scene was very different, howbeit scarcely more delectable, than the one enacted when Roland announced to Bertha that he was engaged. Since that morning, there had been no change in his policy with her. Not for a moment had he shown any of the weakness of mercy toward her inexcusable pride, then manifested more unmistakably than ever, and very properly wounded and cast down. No wonder, then, that he rather welcomed the opportunity of requiring her to second his invitation. She was getting a salutary, if severe, discipline.

She received the request as she did every other now — with her martyred air, combined with determination to add to the reprehensibleness of her persecutions by her uncomplaining endurance of them.

It was very unpleasant, very unlike what it used to be,— this sullen, cheerless obedience on the part of Miss Stuart, which was always saying to Roland, "You are lashing me without cause, but that isn't enough for you. Shall I not pass you fresh whips?"

But Roland's composure under the alteration was perfect. He took a blithe view of passing disturbances. It might not be delightful, for the time being, to have masons and carpenters in one's house, or the placard "Paint!" on one's front door; but it was sometimes necessary to go through with that sort of thing, for the sake of the end to be obtained. He had a general idea that his sister was spiritually under repairs, and a prevailing opinion that, since the thing was going on, it was best to have it rightly done.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE SOUTHERN SIDE.

OF course Miss Stuart was prepared to dislike Leo thoroughly. Leo knew it as soon as she came under the same roof with her. It did not take long to perceive what had before been hidden by distance. She wilted at once in the frosty lady's atmosphere.

She had known that Miss Stuart was opposed to Roland's marrying: now she knew that she was opposed to *her*. She had supposed that Miss Stuart's unwillingness sprang from grief at parting with her near place to her brother, and had pitied her, and had had glowing thoughts about making her more contented by not appropriating him selfishly, and by showing her that nothing was changed except that now there were two, instead of one, to love him. Besides, she would make Miss Stuart love her as well as him, and then all would be right. Roland, too, would be happier—because, of course, it must trouble him to have his sister dissatisfied; and Leo wanted to be the means of bringing gladness, and gladness only, to him. So she must be very careful, and clear away this little harm that had come to him through her.

Roland saw at once that Leo was oppressed. She had not much skill in disguising her feelings. Though she tried, that first evening, to appear gay and not to mind, he knew that she was in momentary danger of giving way to tears.

Very angry was he with his sister, very tender to Leo. With a view to upholding her and rebuking Bertha, he

left his seat for one by Leo, and took her hand lovingly into his. Leo understood the kind action, and it was the signal for her tears to begin to fall. If Roland had not done this, perhaps she would have conquered them; but when we are grieved, offered favor and protection are quite as likely to break us down as roughness and expulsion.

She cried softly, wiping her eyes furtively, and keeping her head turned away from Miss Stuart in the hope that she, a little way off mending stockings, would not notice; but, though she continued to mend, Miss Stuart did notice.

The sudden subsidence of the conversation, which had been going on without much help from her, informed her that something was amiss. She did not look up, but she knew that "that girl" was crying. She knew, too, that that girl was struggling to stop crying before she discovered her in it. She liked that, in spite of herself. If Leo had been demonstrative in the crying, Miss Stuart would have seen directly through her as a crafty minx trying to work upon Roland and make him believe that his sister had broken her heart; but now she could not but admit that the visitor was truly wounded and endeavoring not to think of it.

Miss Stuart suffered a prick of conscience.

"After all, what do I know about the girl," she thought, "that I should behave so to her? It may be as well, at any rate, to unbend and find out what she is made of."

Thanks to the tact and refinement of her lover, Leo soon had herself in hand again. Perceiving her anxiety not to make an exhibition before his sister, he began talking again, and she answered as best she could. Miss Stuart, much thawed, now put in occasional remarks, as much as to say that her former reticence had been consequent on slight acquaintance, natural reserve, inadvertence, or some such thing.

Leo was thunderstruck at Roland's manner of greeting these remarks. Every word that poor Bertha uttered brought out from him some frigid or slighting, sometimes almost ridiculing, rejoinder. Leo grew agitated and ashamed, and fearful of having Roland open his mouth to his sister. It jarred upon her — this way of responding to amicable advances.

"If I could only whisper to him," she thought, "and tell him not to care because Miss Stuart wasn't cordial at first, and that I'd rather he wouldn't think it due to me to resent it!"

But there was no opportunity to say this at present, and he seemed deaf to-night to the telegraphy that often passed so surely and quickly between them as to make words superfluous.

Leo tried not to fidget, but her uneasiness was sufficiently plain. Did Mr. Stuart not perceive her pacific sentiment toward Bertha, or did he purposely disregard it, thinking, possibly, that he knew better than she what correction was adapted to the incivility shown her?

At all events, Leo could not bear to have Miss Stuart's efforts to make amends put down so promptly and decidedly, and stamped upon. Roland was doing it for her sake, she knew; but if only he wouldn't! So she came to the rescue, mildly concurring with the sister's next observation, and pressing Roland's hand, which was holding hers, as though to say, "Don't you see, dear, that she's more gracious now, and that we ought to be forgiving? Those first things are no matter at all!"

But Roland, though he caressed the hand as before, continued to regard his sister coldly, and to give her answers tinged with contempt; but if the meaning of Leo's encouragement of Miss Stuart was lost upon him, it was not lost upon its object herself. She read it instantly, and knew that Leo was running to meet her half-

way on the road to good understanding, and was motioning to her of easy reconciliation and a fair fresh start.

However strong our assurance may be that the ideas we are advancing are conspicuously sensible, and however much justified we may think ourselves in despising one who, for spite, continually disparages our utterances, still we may be not a little pained, shamed, humiliated, by that same disparagement.

It is probable that Miss Stuart was supported under Roland's disdain by the most positive conviction that he was treating her meanly, and was proving himself no gentleman. Nevertheless she had been mortified and humbled at being made his butt and derision before Leo; but now she perceived that the latter was no partaker with him in making a fool of her. She experienced a feeling of unity with Leo as against him.

"She took my part in his very face and eyes," Miss Stuart said to herself. "I thought I wasn't quite all wrong, though I've lived so long with Roland that I was in danger of coming to hold his view on that point. Now there's somebody besides me to see the truth of things, and somebody who sees it at once as I do. Roland *is* crabbed and *does* do wrong, and I'm glad that he's getting it made known to him through somebody besides me."

Leo took the first opportunity, which did not come till the next morning when he went down to the shop with her, to tell Roland how sorry she was to have been the cause of ill-feeling in his home.

"I didn't misunderstand you," she said. "I know perfectly that you thought regard for me required you to reprove Miss Stuart; but I hope you will not think so any more, because nothing could please me so much as to have the past forgiven, and begin all anew."

Roland thought Leo very good and lovable, but he assured her that she knew nothing about what she was talking of.

"She," he said, alluding to Bertha, "deserves to be punished. You are ignorant of how much she deserves it. I like to have you clement and charitable, just as you are; but I must use *my* judgment in matters where I know most."

"Well," Leo inquired solicitously, "shall you have to do so any more?" referring to the continuation of his brotherly discipline rather than to the exercise of his superior discernment. "Oh, don't—please! Promise me!"

She was getting fervent, and passing utterly beyond the bounds allotted to female discretion and inferior judgment.

"Leo," said Roland gravely, "you must not ask me to make promises to you. I shall do what in my judgment appears best. You must trust me—trust my judgment. I think you wish to. I think you mean to. Only you are so quick and eager—so impulsive. It is characteristic of women. They are seldom governed by cool reason. I don't say it's desirable that they should be. I only say they are not. Now hereafter I'm sure you'll understand better, and not want to usurp my office nor influence my decisions. You will understand that a sweeter part is yours—to be simply quiet and benign and—womanly."

That word cut deeply.

"Don't think," Leo implored, "that I am trying to rule you—I should be miserable if you did. Of course you know what is best, if it comes to that. Only I wish the best thing happened to be to forgive Miss Stuart out and out, and begin over again."

"Well, we'll see," said Roland discreetly, much as a parent, propitiated by the proper behavior of a child under refusal of a request, holds out a faint hope that, after all, the gratification may be allowed in the end.



It is supposed that there comes a time when the scales fall from lovers' eyes. That time had not yet come to Leo. Roland believed in himself and she believed in him. He made large and magnificent demands, but not a whit larger or more magnificent than he and she thought he was entitled to make.

Sometimes one who requires a great deal, and when he gets it takes it as matter of course, excites less resistance, less mistrust that he is exacting too much, than the modest, conscientious one who apologizes for claiming anything, and, by offering to be easier with you if you think yourself aggrieved, puts it into your mind to question his right. It is possible to take possession of other people's things with so composed an air of ownership as quite to exclude the suspicion that they are not ours.

Miss Stuart had begun to regard her brother's choice more favorably? Yes, that was her state at the end of the first evening of the visit; but the next morning, when Leo had to hurry away to the shop, her old repugnance to the match returned.

"What if the girl is better than she's been thought?" reasoned Miss Stuart now. "She certainly isn't in so high a condition of life as some that Roland might marry. I don't know that gentlemen are under any obligation to marry shop-girls, if they *are* good. Aren't there good ladies, too, to whom no exceptions of any kind can be taken?"

It mortified Miss Stuart to have the neighbors see Leo going out to her work. Not that she thought it any disgrace to work. She had too much of the old spirit of New England in her for that. Still she cringed when the front door closed and she knew that Leo and Roland were going down the street together — for he had insisted upon accompanying her. He would come back and have an hour or two at home before going to the city. When

he came in, Miss Stuart was not much more kindly disposed to his love affair than she had been in the first place.

"How do you like Miss Dayne?" he asked curtly.

"I think she has more sense than I gave her credit for. She didn't want you to treat me as you did last night, any more than I did. You won't gain so much with her as you think you will, by abusing me!"

"Who said so?" cried Roland, turning red and hot with imagining that Leo had given Bertha to understand as much. If she had, the meanness and deception of not telling him just now, when they were talking about his sister and how she should be met! For her to do such a thing would be too outrageous, too chagrining,—fairly making Bertha triumphant over him, fairly humbling him before her. Roland almost expected his sister to break into a justified laugh at his expense.

Miss Stuart had not thought of implying that Leo had had any private word with her concerning Roland's conduct—not till she saw him so vexed in the doubt. Then a perverse spirit entered her, and she refused to answer him satisfactorily.

"It's enough," she said, "that I know Miss Dayne wasn't pleased with you, and it's no matter how I know it."

Roland would not let Bertha perceive any further irritation in him, rightly divining that in her present mood the spectacle would give her satisfaction.

Though within himself far from certain of the fact, he yet declared: "I don't believe Leo even hinted anything of the sort. All that I deplore is your baseness in declining to answer, for the sole purpose of annoying me."

Before night came and he went down to Mr. Chick's for Leo, his mind was pretty strongly made up that she had not spoken of him to his sister. Had she done so,

Bertha would have taken to herself the full comfort of letting him know it. Hence his greeting of Leo was something very different from what it would have been had a day of deliberation brought him to an opposite conclusion. Before they reached home, he had quietly satisfied himself thoroughly that no confidences whatever had been passed between the two, as might have been the case when Bertha showed Leo to her room.

This evening, as on the previous one, Miss Stuart found herself drawn toward her brother's affianced — found her hard prejudice melting, in spite of herself, into smiling and geniality. Leo was so entirely pleasant, and Roland so entirely unpleasant, so entirely unforgiving! Miss Stuart acknowledged that Miss Dayne behaved more becomingly than Roland, out of place and inexplicable as that was.

Perhaps, after all, there was not so much unfitness, so much disparity, so much inferiority on Miss Dayne's part, as Miss Stuart had blindly contended. It was soothing to have somebody — a sister woman — feel that Roland was unjust, and almost stand up for her against him; for so Miss Stuart again interpreted Miss Dayne's affable manner toward herself, contrasted with Roland's rigorous one.

It happened that the young man had an errand out, for an hour, in the middle of the evening. He had an undefined fear of leaving the two women alone together; but why should he have? There would be many times hereafter when they must be so. Was he afraid that Bertha would not be complimentary to him — that she would lower Leo's esteem for him? or was he afraid that Leo would do what it had tortured him in the morning to suspect that she had done — admit to Bertha that she thought him in the wrong?

"Well, if she will do that," he concluded sternly, "I

want to know it, that's all." Therefore he resolutely withdrew, though not with that peace which sometimes follows making an immutable decision, with a desperate resolve to be prepared for any consequences.

It was very still after he went out. Awkwardness seized both the occupants of the pretty room. Leo wanted to say something by way of getting nearer to Miss Stuart—by way of showing approachability; but she could think of nothing in the least adapted to produce such a result. All ideas fled her mind, and seemed determined never to come back, except the one great wish that Miss Stuart were pleased with her.

The silence was growing worse to bear. Leo felt that she was appearing unsocial and disinclined to make advances. It was really becoming very necessary to do something.

All at once it occurred to her, quite as an inspiration, that there was nothing to hinder saying directly, without any roundabout maneuvering at all, just what filled her thoughts to the exclusion of everything else.

Miss Stuart was sitting sedately and thoughtfully at the little table, with its small litter of needle-cushion, scissors, spools, and—a new spectacle-case. She was beginning not to see as well by artificial light as formerly. Suddenly the unconscious lady was startled into dropping her hands and joggling her spectacles into a wry position—a catastrophe which, in the present stage of her practice with them, was always imminent—by an offer of love unprecedented in her experience.

There was Leo standing close by.

"Won't you love me?" she said. "I would love you, and we could all be happy! I love Roland so much"—solemnly—"that I couldn't help loving his sister—if she wanted me to. Do love me!" and Leo sat down on the floor at Miss Stuart's feet, just as she sometimes did at Roland's, and looked up anxiously into her face.

Miss Stuart, who had given all her youth to Roland, was not much acquainted with girls and their ways. "How pretty and innocent it is!" she thought. But this was a sort of thing to which she was not accustomed — this being come at so — singularly. Her new glasses were evidently no nice fit. She said so later. They caused her eyes to water in a way that laid the optician open to censure; though possibly the thoughts Miss Stuart had just been entertaining, about all but herself being endeared to somebody, and about all but herself having somebody to call their own, and about her being alone in the world now, as one might say, may have had something to do with bringing ignominy upon the optician.

Leo penetrated the little fiction about the hurtful glasses, and so, sitting on the floor, leaned her head against Miss Stuart; and Miss Stuart smoothed the tempting thickness of Leo's hair with one hand, the while her eyes were troubling her so badly that she could not speak.

So the ice was broken. Henceforth a road was open into Miss Stuart's heart.

It was easy, thought the young woman on the floor — refraining now, through delicacy, from looking up — to guess why her sudden appeal startled Miss Stuart into crying. It must be hard to have no one to love; to love, that is, intimately, to love for one's very own, as she loved Roland. The young woman on the floor had not come to the time of knowing that when a thing is forever beyond our reach consolation comes, and that consequently the middle-aged woman in the chair was probably not without it. It was very desolate to *her*, she remembered, before she had anybody to give herself to. Looking back on that period from her present situation in a genial climate, it seemed indeed a snowy waste which one wondered one could have dwelt on so long, and a return to which

would be unendurable. It was not for her to see now that she could ever look back on this present blessed love-experience of hers as on a feverish and troubled, if still blessed, dream.

The young woman on the floor thought not only about poor Miss Stuart, but about poor Miss Pratt. It was so pitiable to be a woman and miss love, the greatest blessing of womanhood! If those other women did seem to go along pretty well, and not to mourn, one found out after a while that they did care. It took only a word, or some little thing, to make their tears run over. Oh, dear! if only *all* the hearts that ached could have their needs supplied! The young woman on the floor pitied those other women. "Only I can't get my pity close to me," she said to herself. She pitied them, only their condition was so very different from hers. The thing to bring our pity "close" to us is similarity of fate.

When Roland was heard coming through the garden, and even when his latch-key rattled in the lock, neither of the women stirred. Miss Stuart was composed now. Roland stopped in the hall to take off his hat and overcoat. There was still time to change position, if Miss Stuart preferred. Leo looked an inquiry. For answer, Miss Stuart caught her hand, with an almost frolicsome show of compelling her to stay; and Roland came in.

"See!" cried Leo, not giving him time to wonder. "We love each other now! We're more than friends! Aren't you glad?"

Mr. Stuart did not look wholly enraptured. Without seeming to perceive Bertha, he smiled down at Leo, with a strong effort to merge in playfulness any displeasure he felt, and said —

"You know I don't allow you to love anybody but me. Love is a word not to be lightly applied — a thing not to be lightly conferred. If you have any superfluous

caresses," here his eye traveled near enough to his sister to rest for a moment on the hand she held, "I should like to be the recipient of at least a share of them, especially after an absence."

Roland paused; but under a perception that all through he had been dropping down, down, through the grades that lie between trifling and bitterness, he added, with his laughable grimace and a return to his mocking air,—

"Come! I'm consumed! The green-eyed monster devours me!"

A good deal disappointed, Leo scrambled up from the floor with all haste, to be "held" by her injured lover, and to recompense him for his wrongs; for, in spite of his attempt at jocoseness, it was plain that there had been considerable seriousness in his words.

"That's just the way!" thought Miss Stuart. "They'll fly to each other like a couple of spring birds; and precious little do they think about anybody else if they can only have each other. I'm good enough to be paid attention to when Roland isn't here, but the minute he comes, off she goes, minding every word he says, exactly as I've always done;—and that's like a fool! And nothing but death, I s'pose, could stop her."

It was provoking, undeniably, to have those two petting each other under one's very nose. There was as much softness between them, Miss Stuart estimated, as there ever was between the hero and heroine in the most nauseating novel. Really, Roland was sillier than his sister would have believed possible. His excellent education, completed at one of the oldest colleges in the land, and supplemented with some brief studious travels abroad, did not make him a jot different in love from anybody else. In fact, Miss Stuart thought she never, in all her days, observed anybody as foolish as he now appeared.

"To be jealous of a woman! And to hear him now, telling Leo that he must be first! As if there's any danger of that girl making me first! Roland may be sure I'm of no account when he's within sight. The girl is all swallowed up in him, head and ears, already. I question whether there could be any dedication to himself strong enough to content Roland."

Yet it fretted the sister to hear the voices of the lovers lowered, and to know that there was something on the face of the earth at least somewhat satisfying to her brother, and that she herself was no fraction of that something.

"To listen to them now!" Miss Stuart continued. "They've fallen into one of their discussions — on some lofty subject — that they seem to enjoy so much. I should think those two never do talk about anything common! They're as like as two peas! Nothing of earth is of any consequence! I think it strange, for my part, that Roland works at all, or attends to any creature wants! I wonder he doesn't give himself up entirely to abstruse contemplations, and live on faith, and wear rags! And that girl wouldn't oppose him if he did, but would go with him and do likewise! Here she is now, saying something about 'Truth,' and about 'Revelation,' and about 'Nature,' and asking if he has ever thought about This or doubted That. For my part, I can't see what earthly good it does people that have a belief, and believe it, to be speculating and inquiring as that girl does. It's enough to remind one of some of those heathen philosophers."

Leo's scrutinizing and questioning tendencies were proving persistent enough to be hereditary; but at present they were not what might be called "dangerous" tendencies. Was she, nevertheless, unconsciously beginning to examine in forbidden fields?



"They're both as interested in those things they talk about," pursued Miss Stuart, "as other people are in business or pleasure. Roland is so unpractical himself that he ought to have a wife that is practical, or else one rich enough to afford to be unpractical."

Miss Stuart was indeed sadly divided between contending emotions. If she had found Leo less attached to Roland, she would have complained of her greatly: finding her as she was, blind to his imperfections and worshipful without measure, just as she herself had always been, aroused in her both the spirit of rivalry and a mild form of contempt. It was weakness in Leo, and Leo had no penetration whatever, not to see what Roland was — not to see that he was exactly what Miss Stuart knew him to be!

Now that he had actually come to being loved, his sister quite resented it that the very state of things which her whole management had been designed to bring about existed — that is, that he was accepted all in all, without a particle of criticism, without any perception of those defects of his which had been the bane of her life.

It drove her to a new ground: she wanted his foibles to be recognized. It began to grate upon her to have him constantly receiving from Leo direct or indirect commendation which she knew he did not altogether merit. It provoked her to have Leo so sweetly and confidently submitting to his leadership in every small affair, as she, his sister, had not always been able to make herself do without a skirmish. It was partly on this last account — the feeling of rivalry — that she had been glad when she thought Leo was in harmony with her as against him. But had she been?

Just here Roland led Leo out to the hall map, and pointed to a black dot of a city, out across some of the pink and yellow and green States, and told her of some-

thing he had learned about an advantageous position there as instructor, likely to be vacant sometime. It might be soon, it might not. It was all doubtful as yet.

"Do you suppose," he asked, "I could induce any little woman you know to marry me, if that time comes, and go with me? If so, I shall certainly accept the place if it becomes open."

The answer was evolved out of a great deal of mutual love-making, the sight of which, it is to be feared, would have much afflicted Miss Stuart if she had sat in range of the hall door; for after they came back and went into intimacies necessitated by contemporaneous occupancy of the big chair on the other side of the hearth, she reflected with acrimony that there was no knowing, after all, that the girl ever had had the least notion that Roland was ever in the wrong or fell short of being an angel—a god. She was gazing into his eyes now, and he into hers for that matter, in a fashion that looked, Miss Stuart considered, fairly idolatrous. Roland would never be brought to value justly his sister's long-suffering virtue through any drill that girl was likely to give him. Yet Miss Stuart would not have wanted him to marry a less devoted woman.

Such was the color of her thoughts now—thoughts almost more complimentary to Leo than to Roland. The next morning they were all reversed again. She saw the tailoress go out to her work, and shrank again from the neighbors' imagined comments—thought again of Roland's talents, and what a pity it was that they should be, in a manner, wasted in an ordinary match.

It was between these two sets of emotions that Miss Stuart was tossed during all the visit, and long afterward. Sometimes her appreciation of Leo's worth overcame her pride: then some little incident, some glimpse into the genteel life and varied accomplishments (acquired under

the best teachers, perennially employed) of young ladies strictly of Roland's class, would again destroy her tranquillity and revive the old conflict in all its original fierceness; but no one except Miss Stuart knew of this conflict. Whom should she tell? She treated Leo blamelessly, even affectionately; for the ice had never formed again since it was so suddenly broken.

Indeed, Miss Stuart was, for the greater part of the time, in the mood favorable to Roland's choice. If her quiet day in the silent house brought the other thoughts uppermost, Leo's gentle manners at night, full of solicitude, her concern to be well thought of, and to do everything, and more than everything, that could be asked of her as lover, sister, and guest, dissipated them. Miss Stuart had knowledge enough of humanity to recognize this as a bountiful soul, giving love and effort munificently, having no prudent conceptions of what was and was not required of it to render or perform, nor as to what it could, with every sanction of propriety and custom, demand in return for limited and self-protecting bestowals of favor.

This, Miss Stuart knew, was not the same as much so-called heart-giving. Leo gave hers as though giving it and having it accepted were her only hope, her whole care being lest the gift were too poor to be approved. If this love—Roland's—that had come to her should fail, she had her eye on no prospective consolations whatever. She would not be eligible to compensation in the shape of some other "fish" in the "sea" of society as good as ever was caught. She had no idea that there was anybody or anything that could take Roland's place to her. She had no such multitude of occupations, amusements, acquaintances, as could weaken her undivided affection. She loved rarely, uniquely.

Miss Stuart was aware of this; and often, when her

ambition would begin to assert itself, the sight of Roland enriched with so exuberant a love, which was in turn so wholly blessed in him, would roll back the rising tide, and she, rebuked and abashed, would resolve to let things take their own course. It was nothing to her whom Roland married, poor Miss Stuart would say in these moments,— would she always have even such moments?— trying to cast out all feeling of union with the affair, and to wrap herself in profound neutrality. She felt at these times that Roland and Leo must be peculiarly kindred natures. How well they understood each other! How much more pacific he was getting to be!

All the animosity between brother and sister was fading out now. Leo was so loving toward them both that somehow her temper had passed into them. Roland was still vigilant for his authority, and asserted it instantly and imperiously when he thought it overlooked; but Leo's kiss and deprecation of asperity had more than once wet other eyes in that house than the ones now compelled to look through glasses to thread a needle. Her love was teaching the brother and sister a blander way than theirs had ever been.

Roland, when he was softened under Leo's influence, praised her ungrudgingly. One day, looking close into her eyes as he had the habit of doing now, and smoothing her hand, he said, with all sincerity,—

"Leo, you are better than I. You are so full of love! It is the way of women. I can't be— except when I have you with me. You make it less difficult to give up my will."

"Don't say I'm better than you," Leo answered, in real distress. "I know I've appeared to be very good since I've been here—this house is so nice and well ordered; but when I'm at home I get so out of sorts! Here I can't. I don't have anything to irritate me, except Miss

Stuart not liking me — at first, I mean; and so it's easy to say right things. They say themselves. I deny having anything to do with it. It amazes me every time one of them comes out; and, knowing how wicked I am at home, I feel as if I'm deceiving you."

"It's very sinful to deceive," interjected Roland humorously.

"I know it," said Leo sincerely; "but I'm sure I didn't intend to deceive, and didn't plan to be different here from what I am there. You make me so, you see. But," growing more serious, "I'm glad we can help each other to be better. Let's take advantage of all the aids we can get. Let's try to be — grand. That's what I want," making a movement as though to clasp some large good that was craved, but could not be defined. "It isn't too much to try for, is it? — what I call grandeur? There are such hard things given to everybody to do, in a hidden way! All the harder because nobody'll know. But we shall know; and God will. That's enough."

"Yes," said Roland, in a listening mood.

"I don't want to live a poor life — paltry. You know what I'm trying to say. But then, my life has been poor. All my longings and discontents haven't made me do anything that was very good — and special. When I go out of my own life, and look at its outside, and range it in line with other lives, mine shows even commoner, more pitiable, than other people's." (Did not such a view of her life bring a "Jack" very prominently to sight, and have a general savor of stains and seediness?) "I've always been groping round the place I was in, and wishing I could get out into better and better things, and be — shall you laugh if I say again what I say so often to myself? — because I can't find any other word that covers so well all the things I mean."

"No, I certainly shall not laugh at any good outreach-

ing"; but Roland smiled in his enjoyment of Leo's disclosures, and of her effort to make herself clear.

"Well, then, I've wanted to be grand. But there isn't any fine way given us—not to most of us—of being that. I've thought about it a good deal, and this is what I think I've found out—that there's a way of being grand just where we find ourselves. It's like this: if the life at home and in the shop doesn't seem grand to me, but I haven't any grander thing within reach to do, why, then the really grand thing, and—this is the best of it—the only grand thing, is to live, to the very best that's in me, the life at home and in the shop. So every one of us has an opportunity, no matter what our place; and if it's a hard place, and doesn't suit us, it's so much the better an opportunity to be grand, because it isn't as easy to be so there as it would be in a place that suited us; and I think the things that are done in that way—the best things one has to do, done in the best way one knows of doing them—are of the very selfsame class as the finest actions in the world. That's my comfort. Only there's this with me: I never have done those things in that best way; because just doing the work in the best way isn't all. One must *feel* right about it, and not grumble at anything, to be really grand."

Leo stopped short, remembering that she had talked a long time. It appeared, however, that she had not been hindering Roland from delivering any very pressing sentiments, for he only asked slyly, "And what will you do when I take you away from the shop and you have only me and the home to do 'grand' things for? Won't you want the coats again?"

"Oh, no!—and that reminds me of what I was going to say: I think I can be grand with you to help me. Not that I think I shall do the coats any better, because I've tried always, as hard as I could, to do them perfectly;

but I'm almost sure I never again shall be so cross at home. I can't understand now how I ever was so. The things there that were such a trial seem so much more trivial now, so much lighter to endure. I'm sorry I wasn't amiable through it all, without you. That would have been the grandest."

"I'll admit it," said Roland, still humorously.

"If I only had been, I should have it to look back upon and rejoice over, shouldn't I?—thinking that I had done something. Well," with a sigh, "I suppose we mustn't be ashamed to acknowledge that we need help; and I have it in you. I have a new impetus, and firmness, and strength; and let us both begin now, and try together to be better, to grow towards all goodness, to die towards all evil. Let us gather to ourselves"—Leo stretched out her arms again—"all that is noble. Let us look forward now."

"Yes, we'll look forward now," said Roland subduedly. "It is useless to look backward"—this last as though he repented of some things in his past; but he continued gravely:

"Leo, I have been watching your words to the end, hoping that I should discover in your ardor for all high development some remembrance of God, some allusion to Him as your dependence. Of every really good undertaking God will be the Alpha and Omega. I distrust—*distrust*—the enthusiasm for divine growth which takes not God into all its thoughts."

Roland was quite apt to throw wet blankets.

"I didn't mean to forget God, and that nothing can be done without Him. You see" (Leo's voice was getting shaky, though she made an effort to smile and to believe she wasn't wounded), "I was thinking so much about the help you are to me—though of course it's God that gives you to me—that I didn't think! That shows how much

I need you to look after me. It's a great fault of mine not to depend as much as I might upon being helped — by any one, but to try to do everything myself."

"Yes, it is a fault of yours, Leo," assented her mentor candidly.

"Please don't mind it!" said Leo, bursting into tears now, and referring to them and not to her fault. "It's right for you to speak of it, and I'm glad you did. You always must, because that's the way for me to mend; and if I weren't glad to have you remind me, that would prove that I didn't really want to be any better. Only I can't help crying; but I shall get over it in a minute, if you hold me."

That was a foolish lovers' fashion — that "holding" which was Leo's consolation on so many occasions lately when it had been most natural to cry, because, as now, Roland chided her for some shortcoming very plain to be seen when it was pointed out, only making one sorrowful. At first, when she began to find herself brought suddenly to these dead stops, it had seemed to her that she must be so very defective in Roland's eyes that he would hardly be able to bear with her imperfections until she could rectify them — indeed, that he must be repenting of his bargain, and desiring to be rid of an article in which he had been badly deceived. Passionately wretched at such times, not only in the thought that her failings altogether warranted such a mind in him, but through a sickening anticipation of loss and separation, — was it, though, an anticipation simply, or a presentiment? — she had clung to him and begged to be "held" — that is, kept forever from heart alienation, borne with, instructed, molded, until she could get to be correct in everything — just what he would have her to be. At the same time she would unburden herself of the grievous intimations she had suffered from within, to the effect that he must have found



her very trying, very crude, very unlike what he had thought her, very unlike other women whom he knew, and that he would not continue to love her.

"Holding," therefore, though it generally included outward appearances corresponding to inward figures, in conformity with the generally discovered principle that lovers will be lovers the world over, had come to have for them other significations than the most apparent.

After he had reduced her to this condition of despairing humility, Roland invariably soothed Leo.

"Very fondly I still 'hold' you," he declared on this occasion, "and always will. If you fail in some things,—and you do,—I am sensible that I, too, have my weak points." (These weak points, though, were evidently as dim and obscure to Roland's vision as to Leo's; for neither of them ever mentioned, or seemed to note, any particular individual specimen of that class of the young gentleman's attributes comprehended under this pleasingly considerate term.) "It is our duty," he concluded, "to be mutually forbearing";—only it was thought, in a loose way, by both, that all the forbearance was exercised by him.

So Leo was "held," as usual, after the last misdemeanor recorded of her—neglecting to pay suitable attention to her Creator, and evincing a proneness to repose in good works.

Roland even smiled and became genial when she could not stop crying. He funnily wiped away a big, round, salt tear (Leo's tears were always so thorough-going!), and said, "This fault of yours will have to be called a very, very little one, after all, because it has its root in love—love of me; and sin against God committed through love of a human being is, I think, a very different sin indeed from one committed—for instance—through hate of a human being. Nevertheless" (here he reined him-

self severely back from doctrinal wanderings, under a perception that perhaps he was blurring the sharp line between right and wrong, and building up the unhallowed theory that some sins are small enough to be excusable) — “nevertheless, God strictly forbids that any should love a human being more than Him. He must be supreme. You must remember it, Leo.”

Leo reflected.

“I can’t be constantly asking myself whether I am not loving you too much, and whether I don’t owe some of the love to God. I don’t think He wants me to, either. He tells me to love you, and everybody. He truly does — in my heart. I can’t measure out my love. God loves you, and I don’t think He’s small enough to weigh the love you get from others, to see if it’s not more than your share, and to see if part doesn’t belong to Him. I believe that God is pleased — altogether, too — when we love a human being, even if we never think at all about Him in it, — unless we love the human being in some bad way. I believe God counts it the same thing as loving Him when we love one of His creatures. I shall — I must — love you just as it comes to me. I can’t love you in some other way.”

When a young man wants very much to be loved precisely as a young woman wants to love him, and complains of her way only on the general ground that it is well to keep her reminded of her fallibility, he is peculiarly susceptible to the force of arguments tending to show that the thing is lawful and right.

Leo’s rebutter was therefore naturally convincing to Roland. At least he resigned himself, without any very heroic resistance, to receiving her endearments “just as they came” to her, having doubtless gained some of her confidence in the mercies of a scrupulous God in counting these “the same thing” as love of Him; and he

remarked thoughtfully, in extenuation of a sudden softening toward her Godward omissions which might be liable to be considered undignified, "Possibly the wise head might learn of the loving heart"—that is, Roland's wise head of Leo's loving heart.

"I don't know," she continued ponderingly, beginning, now that she was "held," to give her usual conscientious heed to trifles, "whether those things that I said about being grand—how it was possible to be that in a small place—were mine or not. I've been thinking that I may have read them somewhere, instead of their being really my thoughts."

"No matter if you did," said Roland, whose delivering of himself up to Satan in accepting love just as it came, without effecting an equitable division of it with his God, had evidently weakened the entire bulwark of his virtue,—  
"No matter if you did."

"Well, whether I did or not, I know that thoughts of that sort have come to be a part of myself—something to live by."

The much-dreaded visit was at length ended, and the visitor was at home again. What had it accomplished? Much, Roland thought. It had brought Bertha to love Leo almost as well as he did. The sister openly avowed now that she had been wrong, and cordially extended her fellowship, so that he no longer excluded her from his counsels nor cautioned Leo against intimacy with her. The three were one in purpose and effort, and Roland told Leo proudly that he had known nobody could stand out against her after being once acquainted.

Would the day ever come when Miss Stuart would twist Leo's confiding utterances, extorted now with a half-formed plan,—a kind of presentiment that they might be useful to her later,—till the poor girl would

never have known them? At all events, Leo was much relieved because the visit had apparently turned out so well.

Sometimes the thought thrust itself upon her that Miss Stuart was not quite sincere; but she could not entertain it without charging upon her so many direct falsehoods, as well as indirect deceptions, that she rejected it as unworthy. She did not know of Miss Stuart's battle with herself; but Miss Stuart knew Leo now, and how to "take" her. If she should ever want to overthrow the match, she would not have the same obstacles before her as formerly.

But what effect had the visit produced upon Leo herself? Had she gained any fresh insight into the character of her future husband? — for close association with any one whom we regard as vastly superior to others commonly dissipates the notion. Did she love him less? Had the numerous incidents wherein he had figured directly before her eyes operated against her romantic estimation of him?

Roland put some such query shortly after her return to Utopia; and she replied, with a full gaze that had no shrinking in it, "I love you."

There was no doubting it; but the answer was such as to raise further inquiry. She expected this.

"But there's something else," Roland said, putting his hand under her chin and raising her face up to scan it. "You may as well tell me all about it, you know, because I shall find out anyway"; for it had come to be acknowledged between them that no secret of one could be long kept from the other. Somehow the fact of its existence would always beat its way through from consciousness to consciousness, and lead, as now, to explanation.

"You may love me as well," continued Roland, "but you have had new thoughts about me?"

"Yes."

"I listen — and I want a full account from you."

"Well, at first I was surprised at — You won't be hurt, will you?"

"No," said Roland, a little doubtfully.

"Because I do love you wholly — without any reservation whatever. But I was surprised at first because you were so — stern, so much of the time. I didn't know you could be, and could say such hard things."

"It is sometimes a duty to say hard things."

"Yes — but it made me afraid; and I trembled; because — Roland — when you are angry you are terrible. My very blood turned pale with fear. I don't mean with fear of you, but for the marriage. I was afraid I could not always be unruffled if you were sharp — by and by, when we should be all the time together. I began to think how ill-tempered I have been at home so much of the time since father died, and I wondered if I could trust myself not to be so, ever, if I were married."

"Could you?" a little humorously.

"Oh, Roland, if we should fall into being cross to each other and omitting courtesy, and all the glory should fade out, and we should fall down, down, into being just humdrum to each other, it would be unendurable! I shouldn't want to be married unless I could be grand in it — grand, I mean, in being patient and loving and helpful."

Leo did not happen to think that Roland was perhaps as much called on to reform his irascibility as she to put up with it.

"Because where would be the use of it at all, if I weren't going to be a blessing, and not a curse, to you? It doesn't seem so dreadful to me to live unworthily alone as it does when bound in such intimacy with another. That's a distinct new life, and in it I want to do better than I have in the one I leave — labor more successfully to subdue myself."

"Yes," said Roland approvingly.

"Well, then, of course I shouldn't want to enter it at all if I were going to fail of all that more than I did before. I remembered that you had never once seen me in one of my ill-humors, because, as I've told you, I can't be in one at your house; and I thought, What if I were married, and should get really vexed — just once? Suppose something should be *so* exasperating that I couldn't help it? You would look at me with such amazement! You would have learned, then, the ugliness of the flaw, and something of the dearness would be gone. If one could only avoid the first departure from good-nature! But then I thought, Suppose I did fall, and afterward was sorry,—and I am sure I should be sorry, because I always have been, even at home,—and asked you to forgive me, why, then perhaps you could take me back in spite of the falling, and love me just as well—that is, if I strove very hard not to fall again?"

"Yes, I could love you anyway, or under any circumstances," said Roland tenderly, and really believed what he said.

Leo's implication that he was quite irresponsible for his temper, and her distrust of her own to support the legitimate strain to be imposed upon it by his, did not strike him as anything out of place. It appeared to him very natural and right that she should be examining herself with reference to her fitness for sustaining with perfectness the responsibilities incident to matrimony; but he was agitated by no perception that he needed to distrust himself, or confess any errors, or otherwise modify the irreproachable tenor of his way.

"So, after a while," continued Leo, "I began to be less afraid. I knew I should tell you all about what had worried me, and I thought that then we could be prepared. We should see the danger before we were in it,

and so shun it; or if we did sometimes get a little way into the trouble, we should understand and help each other out. I saw that I ought not to be too proud to let you know my defects just as they are; and then, starting from that ground,—expecting some difficulty,—we could guard ourselves and each other. I began to see that love ought to be for service in the every-day wear and tear—ought to be what could give us power to acquit ourselves well in it; and that, instead of being alarmed because love was going to be put to the test, I ought to be thankful for so strong an encouragement to greater effort; and it does help me very much to love you; and—you’ve sometimes said that I help you—to have more love for everybody.”

“Yes, you do help me to that frame of mind. Contact with your affectionate nature produces that result. All women are so.”

This oft-repeated opinion of Roland’s, that all women were like her, galled Leo. He observed it now, whether he ever had before or not.

“What trouble?” he asked persuasively.

“Oh, Roland, I’m not jealous—at least, I don’t think I am; but it does disturb me so to have you say that every other woman is just like me! It sounds as if I weren’t going to be held forever; as if—possibly—some time—somebody else would do for you as well as I. I want to be *the* one of all the world to you. You are to me. I think there’s nobody in the whole universe like you, nor half so good—for me; and so it isn’t close enough, and exclusive enough, and precious enough, when you think that. I want to be more, and a great deal more, than any other woman could be to you!”

“Well, so you will be—so you are; because I have chosen you to be my wife; but you must not try to deprive other women of what is their due, nor think that

you are richer in affection than they. In these respects, women are all similar."

"I don't believe that!" exclaimed Leo, whose disposition to do her own thinking was always liable to get the upper hand,—though it had not yet done so in the most important domains,—and whose heart yearned too intensely to credit that it was precisely like every other female heart. "Because," she went on, catching his hands, "I do and will love you more than any other woman in the world ever will or can. The reason why I am able is that God never gave me anybody else to love as I wanted to—don't you see?"

"Well," said Roland, with resignation to Leo's devotion, but unwilling to sacrifice truth, "I don't say that any woman ever will love *me* as well as you do. I shall not ask any one to, you know; but still all women are very affectionate."

Roland could not imagine that this judgment of his would soon and suddenly—or ever—help to lead him into difficulties which would cause him to modify it.

"There may be exceptions," he continued, "but I am speaking of the rule."

"Let me be the only one to love *you*," said Leo, drawing nearer. "I know what I'll do! I'll love you so much that you'll never need any other love—you'll be filled with mine."

"Of course I shall—always," said Roland.

If such words as "always," which we use so freely, were to be defined by the actions we commonly link with them, they would soon come to have a different meaning. Roland would have been perfectly incredulous if his future for a twelvemonth, or even for half that time, could have been foretold. He did not mean to do what he did do; but he was weak in thinking himself very strong—stronger than Bertha, for instance.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### WORSE THAN A "LITTLE DIFFICULTY."

It often happens that two antagonistic sets of influences simultaneously commence their action in or upon a life. So had it been with Leo. No sooner did the great joy of loving and of being loved come to her than there sprang to strife as it were a thousand discomfited forces endeavoring to snatch it from her.

In the first place, there had been blind and thoughtless rumor, whispering round Roland its multiplied mistakes. Then there had been Miss Stuart, with her hostility at first and her mixture of hostility and approbation afterward. Then there had been Miss Fessenden, with her freedom and flatteries, how great and how moving Leo did not know. Then there had been Leo's own despair — induced by her visit, now some time back — of ever being moderate-blooded enough to prove a benediction to Roland's home.

Besides all this, there had been another long feeble and unrecognized, but of late rapidly developing power assailing the safety of the lovers.

This was now pressing itself boldly into notice. Had it come to reinforce the ranks of opposition, or, by baring heart to heart more completely, as only momentous experiences can do, was it to secure from breakage the brittle bands of youthful love by covering them about with the durable substance of a deeply grounded and immutable respect?

Side by side with this last influence there was work-

ing—vigorously now—that other influence that had never quite slumbered—sly Miss Stuart's. She could have told, if she had chosen, why since Leo's return home Roland had been receiving from various sources so many appeals that could scarcely be put off, to join in this, that, or the other social or religious undertaking.

But the great difficulty—the mysterious one—appeared to be in Leo herself—some trouble that she would fain not burden others with, nor ask even Roland to share; though indeed, on account of having to respond to those appeals of which Miss Stuart knew more than he, Roland was growing so very busy that he could not be with Leo as much as when she first returned to Utopia.

"We are becoming strangers to each other—comparatively," he had recently said, laughing, and intending an allusion to the extreme constancy in visiting which he had been able to show at first.

Sometimes at the shop, in a secluded corner, unnoticed, Leo bowed her head for a second on her hands; and at noon if she could get a few moments alone, she spent them in reading a little book none too large to be carried in a pocket—the Bible. Often if Roland were not coming in the evening, she left word at home that she should be late—she was going, after work, to Mr. Thayer's.

The rector had found admission to this dark woe of hers, if no one else had. Great responsibilities, great opportunities, have these men,—the clergy,—and hard, nice questions about doctrine and about practice do they have submitted for their decision.

As on one other occasion, so now, Leo made a clean breast of it, whatever "it" was. She would have told Roland first of all, only she had hoped she might never have to grieve him with it; and now Mr. Thayer was sure that she ought not—at least not immediately—to disclose it to any one.

Not even to her own family would he have had it revealed; but they had already divined it for themselves. It would only distress, possibly injure, whoever heard it, the minister said; and Miss Dayne would soon, he believed, have passed out of her present state of disturbance, and be again established in her creed. Even mature Christians had been harassed by many and oppressive assaults of the enemy; and he could not think that God would suffer one who desired the truth, as Miss Dayne did, to be finally led away and lost.

So the placid rector, with his feet fast fixed on the Rock of Ages, and his calm eyes of questionless trust uplifted to the heaven of his Christ, soothed and advised his passionately perplexed parishioner.

This was the whole of the mystery—that Leo had come now to be clearly puzzled about her faith—her belief; for the truly dignified mind entertains many thoughts, is exercised by many queries, is embarrassed by many plausibilities in all of which it is able to perceive some merit; the truly dignified mind does not rest in one view, is not convinced beyond appeal that that is the only one having the least claim to attention, is not certain that that enjoys a monopoly of all verities and is the medium of all mercies, to the impoverishment of every other.

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To turn back and learn something of what had been taking place in Roland's home the while Leo had been thus meeting agitation and trial:

When she had gone home from her visit and Bertha was alone, the war in the latter's breast began to rage yet more fiercely than ever. Dwelling upon Roland's capabilities, or "talents," and upon what their development and cultivation had cost her, resuscitated all of the doting sister's first objections to this match.

Thanks to Leo, Roland was on perfect terms with Bertha; and no man could be more agreeable than he under such circumstances. He was happy now, and even the remembrance of his sister's original detestation of his choice, and of the bitterness it had occasioned between them, appeared to have been left behind. Therefore she could, just at this time, perceive more clearly than usual his good points — could appreciate more fully than usual his extraordinary desirability as a husband; for greatness itself is liable to be somewhat obscured, even to partial eyes, when it takes on roughness of manner and harshness of speech.

Perhaps, then, it was no strange thing that Bertha should soon come to be in precisely the same attitude toward Roland's betrothal as at the very beginning — the same, except that now she respected Leo entirely, and would be sorry for her if Roland should change his mind; but then it would not kill Leo if he should. Folks did not die so easily, Miss Stuart had noticed. It might kill her in one sense: that is, people might not think so well of her; but, in that sense, it would kill Roland to marry her. People would not think so well of him,—how could they? — with a wife whom they felt to be not exactly his equal in society.

The only difference was, that Leo had been used to being ill thought of. If Roland should not marry her, nothing much harder would be said and thought of her than had been said and thought before. It would simply revive and corroborate. Miss Stuart did not know why Leo should not suffer this much for Roland's sake, instead of his suffering everything for her sake. If it was a question of preserving one or the other, why, which should be preserved, the one that was whole and fair, or the one that had been — there was no denying it — assailed and scarred? To be sure, the damage came through misfortune, not guilt. Still, there it was.

The longer Miss Stuart thought on these things, the more obvious it became to her that the perfectly uninjured was the correct person to be saved. This idea continued to be strongest whenever she chanced into company of Roland's own proper grade, and especially when she met the lady whom she had rather expected him to marry. This, as will be seen, happened rather often.

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Meantime Leo continued on the rack of religious doubt.

In the numerous interviews he had with her, the nature of which must be divined from infrequent glimpses of them,—separated, let it be remembered, by considerable spaces of time,—Mr. Thayer made diligent inquiry into the causes of her doubt.

She did not know how it had come about, nor exactly when the earliest indistinct movements of skepticism began. It must have been long ago; but they weren't traceable. It was all so gradual!

"Have you been reading any heretical works?" was naturally one of the first questions to be put.

"How could I?" asked Leo. "I should think it wrong! I know that we must take heed what we hear."

"But, dear child, there is much written now, that, though not avowedly unchristian, yet tends to undermine our loyalty. Then," smiling kindly, "since you have not knowingly read what militates against the faith once delivered to the saints, of course you have not listened to such sentiments. Not that I suppose you would attend upon any public utterance of them; but it may be that some friend—some one at Mr. Chick's, for instance—has sown these tares in your mind."

"No," Leo said, "I have not, to my knowledge, a single acquaintance who doubts as I do. I know some who are not in the Church, but none who do not believe. It seems

to me that I began to think and reason *within myself*, and then to distrust the foundation of those things I have been taught; so nobody but myself is to blame." (It did not occur to her to regard her perplexity as the result of an impulse hers only through inheritance.)

"Yourself — and the tempter of souls," said the minister strongly.

"Yes," assented Leo timidly, "if these thoughts really come from him; but it is always in my mind now, that in driving questioning thoughts out I may be driving God's thoughts out. I am so tossed!"

"But the Word of God — that is the criterion He has given us by which to judge our thoughts. Whatever contradicts that is not of Him."

"I never used to think otherwise," said Leo; "but now I am haunted by the thought that as long as our reason is surely from God, whatever contradicts that is not of Him."

As was to be expected of one always disposed to independent views in other things, her doubts, once thoroughly aroused, were working powerfully.

"There may be a higher reason than ours," responded the rector.

"Yes, you have reminded me of that before; but I keep thinking that reason must be *one*, and that even if we had only the rudiments of it, those would agree with the rest — that God wouldn't mock us by giving us reason that contradicted reason."

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That Miss Stuart had any completely formed design in beginning, awhile after Leo's visit, to court Miss Fessenden's society is not certain; but she fell to thinking about the lady, and she thought about her much of the time. She wanted to know how she looked upon

Roland's engagement. She became possessed of curiosity to hear what she would say about it. It struck her as singular that she had not — apparently — remarked upon it. She began to think it significant that she had not called since it was made public.

Miss Stuart had been, at one time, extraordinarily cordial toward Miss Fessenden, and had imagined that Miss Fessenden divined why: now she wondered, and wished to ascertain, whether she had indeed understood, and whether she had not had hopes that Roland would care for her, and whether her quietness now was not explainable as pride and disappointment.

At any rate, Miss Stuart desired to see Miss Fessenden; and this desire so grew upon her that she was fain to cast about for an excuse. There was no reason why she should not go to Miss Fessenden without an excuse, as they were in the habit of exchanging occasional calls; but she wanted a fictitious errand with which to hide the true one. As these are easier to light upon than those of any real urgency, she found herself one cold, bright afternoon (already the Winter was far spent — Spring almost upon them — time was flying fast!) going up the stone steps, and standing on the marble floor of the vestibule, and pulling the silver bell-knob of a pretentious house, and reading the name on the heavy door — "Fessenden."

How solid, substantial, handsome, everything was! Nothing common and plebeian here! The very tinkle of the far-off bell which she had rung sounded select and aristocratic in the hush. How much better adapted was all this to Roland than that he should be walking his feet off, like a tramp, to seek out a shop-girl living in the poorest part of the town!

Miss Fessenden's home was farther up the hill than Miss Stuart's, and hence commanded a clearer view of the business part of Brackton. As she stood there on

the steps, Miss Stuart looked below her and picked out the building wherein Leo was at that moment doing or overseeing the doing of men's sewing, and most likely praying for the removal of her vexing doubts. The slated roof, and the glistening skylight, and the silvery puffs from some laborious and vulgar steam-pipe or other, all seemed to disgust and sicken Miss Stuart unaccountably and make the parlors into which she was shown appear a grateful refuge from some odious sight, some threatening danger.

She stealthily studied everything about her as she sat waiting for Miss Fessenden to appear — stealthily, because her thoughts were stealthy. This house was not new to her — she had visited it before. Yet in one sense it was new: because she saw it now for the first time against the foil of another — the one wherein Roland was content to seat himself familiarly, the unceremonious fellow of mechanics, the happy suitor of a tailoress; and also because she saw it with a certain new mind in herself.

The dreamy influence that Miss Fessenden herself was wont to exert resided in some degree in the rooms that represented her. Miss Stuart experienced the enchantment of warmth and fragrance, of dimness and stillness. The air was rich — and heavy. She went over to the piano, and smelled the bouquet of conservatory flowers whence must come all these faint odors. Then she looked at the sheet of music open on the rack, as though she would secretly discover the quality of Roland's future wife. When a depending ornament on her sleeve hit one of the keys and made it sound, she fairly jumped. It was really very still.

On Miss Stuart's arrival, Miss Fessenden, who never failed of having new raiment at Easter, and therefore liked to begin early in Lent, was under the hands of her dressmaker; but when she came in, she was consistent



with all the rest — sweet, subdued, charm-working. Miss Stuart had never been so captivated by her. There was something particularly impressive in her reception of the visitor. Crossing the room, she silently took both Miss Stuart's hands and pressed them with a kind of mournful delight, hesitated an instant, and then kissed her, as though words were too feeble to attest the special welcome she had for her at this time and so she did not try them.

This was only one of Miss Fessenden's regular modes of complimenting; but to Miss Stuart, whose knowledge of her was not intimate, it seemed a proceeding of deep import, actually making her weak, and coloring her with a blush that spread till it reached the hands Miss Fessenden held so feelingly. Her suspicions were confirmed. Miss Fessenden would have been glad if Roland had chosen her! She was grieved by his turning away! Yes, she even loved Roland!

Somehow the talk of the ladies tended, to-day, to the subject of balked plans, of defeated wishes. Both avowed themselves acquainted with the bitterness of unrealized anticipations. Did these two women, looking furtively out from behind the cover of these generalities, comprehend each other? Was Miss Fessenden's pensiveness merely the old pensiveness — or was it, as Miss Stuart thought, caused by being obliged to relinquish expectations raised at one time by a partiality manifested to her by Roland? And did Miss Fessenden fall in soothingly with Miss Stuart's self-condolences on account of a great trial of hers at which she hinted, merely on her general principle of falling in soothingly with everybody's self-condolences, without caring whether the sufferings consoled ought or ought not to be sympathized with, — or because she did, in truth, think that young Mr. Stuart's union with her sister-churchwoman would be an unmitigated disaster to

him and his sister? And did she promise to call on Miss Stuart very soon (the latter anxiously appointed a near day) so as to afford her the relief of company under her burdens, company which Miss Stuart declared she needed very much, merely on her general principle of doing what she was asked to do, and of being friend-making at all hazards,—or because she entered into a deliberate conspiracy with Miss Stuart?

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"I wish I could tell Roland!" said Leo irrelevantly, to Mr. Thayer, in one of their consultations. She had said the same thing at every previous meeting. "I'm afraid it isn't right to be private, even for a little while; and it is getting to be a long while. He is so near to me!—and I never have kept anything else from him."

Mr. Thayer was a man of suave and agreeable words. Still, he had the faculty of carrying his point as few can. It was not his method to confirm persons in contrariness by bluster and insistence. Nevertheless, at the end of a talk with the unpolemic rector, one found himself somehow won over to think that it was best, because of some contingency or contingencies suggested by the pastoral mind, to do as Mr. Thayer would have him do, at least for the time being or until further development was had; and so gently, so peaceably, by his genuine sweetness and his quiet entreaties, did the rector accomplish these feats that people scarcely suspected they were being led and overcome by a man very strong in the fixedness of his purposes and in the inexorableness of his perseverance.

He was extremely averse to having Miss Dayne reveal now to any one, especially to Mr. Stuart, the commotion in her mind. He regretted very much that her relatives, and through them Mr. Follansbee, were aware of it, and he did not care to inquire as yet what their attitude

toward it was. But one, at least, of these, he had no cause to fear—Jack Follansbee. That gentleman had tied his own tongue when he denied so emphatically to Leo that he held any unapproved religious opinions, and was at present cursing his luck, in that he could not now, without her penetrating and despising him, utter much that was in sympathy with what he had learned through Seth was her present state of mind.

Leo had come to Mr. Thayer's study to-night with the determination to tell him that she must and would no longer have a secret from her lover; for she was no nearer to a settlement of her religious difficulties than when she first brought them to her pastor, now a good many months ago.

Mr. Thayer believed that if she did not strengthen her skepticism by discussing it, it would soon be overcome. Moreover, he had not the profoundest confidence that Mr. Stuart's advice would be of the wisest kind. Miss Dayne's lover was a young man for whose character and abilities he entertained an exceptional respect, but whose slight dependence upon the outward forms of religion, and consequent intermittent attendance upon service, the punctilious rector could but regard as very unfortunate indeed.

He did not think there was much danger that Mr. Stuart would be drawn by Leo into heresy; still, such a thing might be. He remembered that he had known one or two men reared in the Apostolic Church actually to leave it, upon marrying, for one of the sects. The influence of women, in these instances, must have been marvellously great; and in considering the consequences which might follow Leo's proposed disclosure, he did not overlook that a possible—barely possible—one was that the young man's faith might be more weakened by her doubts than her faith strengthened by his faith.

But this was not what he most feared; for, although he was somewhat sensible that a pervasive unbelief was abroad, he could not realize that it was very mighty, that it actually invaded the meditations of sober Christians whom he met every day, that it was verily a formidable enemy, at whose inroads the Church could no longer afford to smile as at the harmless barkings of an upstart poodle.

So old, so solid, so impregnable, did the structure of his faith appear to the Reverend Mr. Thayer, and so colossal and so excellent the organization—the Church of God—in which he had spent his days and performed his work, and with whose wide operations he was therefore well acquainted, that he could not understand how men of intelligence could sincerely fail to believe that these things were of supernatural and heavenly origin.

Leo's skepticism was perhaps the first that he had encountered in his own congregation; and she had observed more than once, with perplexity, that he smiled at her incredulously, as much as to say, "Why, my dear child, you can't mean that these doubts of yours are real!"

In fact, Mr. Thayer did think, especially at first, that her reasonings arose as much from the egotism of youth, and its desire to display itself, as anything. Of course he knew that daring men were contesting the truth of the Scripture, and opposing their researches and discoveries to its divine grandeur; but he was less familiar with the deductions of these men than with the sayings of certain savants which are employed to support the accepted theology.

He believed that the Bible would stand, let come what might,—believed that it was propped by the very hand of God, and that His omnipotence was pledged to sustain it through the ages, against the assaults of the godless and irreverent, and to fulfill, without disappointment, to

humble and relying souls, its mighty promises. It was but natural, therefore, that he should underrate investigators not able to perceive any matchless glory whatever about the book, and whose fearless eyes scanned its sacred pages very much as they scanned the pages of other books, and whose steady fingers did not tremble in pointing persistently to blemish and falsity. No wonder that he thought such students a curious, abnormal product, monstrosities to be amazed at, as showing how a haughty intellect, destitute of the spiritual faculty, may make a man prefer to wander, a naked maniac, among the tombs, rather than be converted and healed.

Mr. Thayer stood ready to admit that there might be inaccuracies in the translation of God's Word, and even other impairments — small ones — traceable to the human agency through which that Word had been given, and that there was much in it, too, which poor human vision could not fathom — stores of meaning which perhaps the soul could explore and appropriate only in the course of an everlasting existence; but that the book, taken all in all, was not the one special and unique revelation of God to man — this was the opinion which caused him to look upon one who held it as a singular and unaccountable phenomenon, a victim of a strange lack; and this was the very opinion that was threatening to take possession of his deceived parishioner's mind, and this the fact that she wanted to make no secret of, at least to Roland.

Aside from the possibility — hardly worth considering — that there was such a defect in Mr. Stuart as would render him liable to be shaken from his footing on Holy Writ, the minister desired him to be kept in ignorance of Miss Dayne's scruples because they might introduce discord between the two, or give Mr. Stuart a sense of hopeless uncongeniality in Miss Dayne. Mr. Thayer knew the young man as one of a somewhat obstinate and

austere religious temperament. Perhaps these scruples would even overthrow his confidence in her correctness of life; for since conduct always sprang directly from belief, one whose belief was wrong could hardly be supposed to have his conduct right. So Mr. Thayer was resolved that Miss Dayne should not let Mr. Stuart know of her unsettlement. It would not be wise; and the command was to be wise, not merely harmless. If she were fixed in heterodoxy, the case would be changed; but she would soon be restored.

His means of bringing Leo to submit to his leading in this particular were well adapted to effect the purpose.

"Are you willing," he asked, "to take the position that you *know* your novel thoughts to be truth? Are you willing to declare that you have lost *all* trust in the tenets of your fathers?"

Of course she could make but one reply to this—a choked one; for the rector's explicit interrogations had a decided tinge of rebuke about them, and somehow sounded like shutting a door—the Church's door—on a homeless straggler, who nevertheless refused to come in. But Leo's doubts were still far enough from being confirmed doubts.

"Oh, no!" she said. "You see that I am only a seeker, only waiting for illumination; uncertain, not certain. I do not know anything,—that is the trouble,—not even the things I have always thought I did; and so how can I say I know other things on which I have only more recently begun to ponder?"

"Well, then," urged the rector, who perceived that she was startled at the thought of being in absolute disbelief and alienation, and who had not meant to strike harder than was good for her, "since it would grieve you to be thought actually arrayed against evangelical doctrine, and since you have not as yet any definite and stable fallacies

to confess, it would be, as I think you will grant when you have thought about it carefully, only afflicting Mr. Stuart, probably unnecessarily,— God grant it!—to reveal to him the tumult that is in you; whereas, if you will but continue as you are, praying and reading and hearing, we have every reason to believe that there will be no occasion to disquiet those to whom you are near with the knowledge of your intellectual malady, until it is gone and you can laugh at the problems which now defy you. Understand me,” he said hastily, observing that she was about to speak, and being fearful that he had failed to convince her. “I do not advocate this course except for the time being, and in the hope—nay, belief—that your speedy return, with all heartiness, to your allegiance to the Church’s teachings will make it needless to distress you both, and perhaps even cause a rupture which no subsequent return of yours could make quite whole again.”

“I should be willing to wait,” said Leo thoughtfully, “if I were surer of returning; but I am afraid I may not. The more I think and pray, the farther I appear to be from believing. ‘Unreasonable’ seems painted large across so many pages of my faith—what used to be my faith! It grows less and less likely to me that I shall ever be exactly as I was before.”

“The Church is very broad,” said Mr. Thayer. “Very wide intellectual extremes are inclosed within her borders. If one hold to the essentials of Christian dogma as contained in the Apostles’ Creed, the Church insists on no further doctrinal tests.”

“I cannot guarantee,” said Leo, “that my unsoundness will not reach to essentials. In fact, it does already; and what if at last I had to tell Roland, just the same, and to add, besides, that I had kept it from him for so long?”

The rector looked abstracted. He was thinking, not

of Leo's query, but of what preceded it. He had taken alarm at her words implying that the clouds of skepticism were menacing the whole heavens of her faith, and more than ever was he anxious that she should receive, at this critical moment, the pure, unmixed admonitions of the Church, and that she should recognize it as her sole guide and counselor. Too many advisers could but increase the bewilderment of one already bewildered.

If he could but save Miss Dayne from indiscreetly setting forth and explaining her distractions now while they were comparatively fresh and forcible to her (the rector overlooked how astonishingly the time had lengthened), and before she had an opportunity to examine them still more carefully, and to be informed through a prayerful and unflurried waiting for the Holy Ghost, promised to guide into all truth,—if he could but do this, he thought, he would be keeping her from committing a folly of which she might bitterly repent in the future, after this passing attack on her faith had been parried, and she had come to think her objections ridiculous, and to be ashamed of her momentary fluctuation.

To this end he bent all his powers of reasoning and exhortation, and gained a partial success, in that Leo consented to defer for a time longer the revelation which he was so sure it would be harmful to make. If she had dreamed that he would be able to prolong the term of secrecy many months, by persuading her to renewals of this promise for brief periods, she would not have made it.

As it was, she went away to wrestle singly and silently with the thronging hosts of unbelief, to suffer the wholesome throes by which alone new births of the inner being are accomplished, to be agitated in the spirit as those must be who would develop therein, to pass through the waters that divide the firmament from the firmament no



less in the spiritual than in the terrestrial world, to be torn by the deep motions that accompany moral upheaval and readjustment,—alone, save for her solicitous pastor, who failed not to supply her with the best writings on particulars of doctrine which staggered her faith, and to have many earnest discussions with her, straining to the uttermost, for her behoof, his every art of winning.

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Miss Fessenden entered into no conspiracy with Miss Stuart on the day of the latter's call; but Miss Stuart did not know that. Neither did she know it later, on the afternoon when Miss Fessenden fulfilled her agreement and came to call, staying, through Miss Stuart's impotunity, so long that Roland came home and found her there, and himself somewhat fascinated by her elegant presence.

After he came it was difficult for her to withdraw. It had been a surprise—a pleasant one—to Mr. Stuart, on his return, to come upon this crystal-voiced lady in the parlor with his sister. Leo could never be there in the daytime, and, as we have noted, Roland had had much, for a considerable time now, to keep him from spending as many evenings with her as formerly.

Miss Fessenden showed to-day the same freedom, now no longer liable to be misunderstood, which she had shown ever since Mr. Stuart's engagement. He acknowledged anew the might of that spell which she understood so well how to throw over all; and here there was no gay gathering to divide it. He yielded to it with no thought of wrong.

Miss Fessenden was delighted. It always delighted her to delight. She put forth effort to awaken a man's admiration as naturally as her pulses throbbed. She did not think of remote consequences. Her eyes lifted themselves pleadingly, her ways uttered a thousand praises, her life hung upon his life.

If the vision of a desolate woman, crying, "You are robbing me — robbing — robbing!" forced its way through the mists of the delirious moment, Miss Fessenden still twined about the man, still called down upon herself his tenderness, still crazed him with her stealing perfumes and the roseate thought that he had won this soft creature — that her passionate love held itself back only for wisdom, for virtue. She still said the right thing with amazing tact, still put her foot, with graceful certainty, on every step offered her by stray glimpses into his mind, by intuitional perception of what would please him, to climb into his favor.

Let the wine of his admiration once madden her taste, and her clinging lip must drain the cup. She thought of nothing further then, she heard no whispers of conscience, her ears were inebriated to expostulations from without. The time for her regrets was not then. Perhaps that time came seldom or never.

Miss Fessenden did not want to injure, nor even distress, anybody. "I haven't an enemy in the world — never have made one!" she often exclaimed.

One's enemies may be only so many signs of one's superiority; but it was Miss Fessenden's endeavor to be free of them at any sacrifice.

She excited promiscuously this admiration that she fed upon, and received it from all quarters with satisfaction. If she had moments of perceiving that she was not quite innocent, after all; that she did wrong women — though they might not know who had done it — women with only simple, plain affection to give, and with no power to stir fierce and fiery fancies, no power to evoke blind worship and infatuation, still she could reflect that she willed no detriment to them. How was she to help it if men belonging to them paid to her some tributes? Those things could not be prevented, and such women need think them-

selves fortunate that nothing worse came. A lady could not be expected not to appear at her best for fear some other lady would be aggrieved.

Miss Fessenden had always kept herself within the recognized bounds of morality. When she had occasion to inspect her conduct seriously, she remembered this fact, and that very bad coquetries indeed, whereby families were rent and hearts broken, were far from being unknown. Then her uneasiness subsided, and her own possible fallings-short of the cleanest separateness from these very bad coquetries indeed seemed quite too slight to be thought of.

And Roland admired, and admired very much, this exquisite lady, still like a nun without a vow, whom he had come upon in the parlor with his sister. He had not met her before, for more than a few minutes at a time,—those occasions of which he had said nothing to Leo,—during a long period. It occurred to him more forcibly than ever that Miss Fessenden admired him, and admired him very much. Was it not somewhat to be expected that she should? He looked for no arts, conscious or unconscious. There was a sweetness in her air toward him that wrought upon him. Although he would have rejected open flattery with aversion, he was nevertheless thoroughly flattered now. Miss Fessenden's adulation was too delicate to be offensive.

Miss Stuart, observing Roland's animation and the sparkle of his eye, might once, perhaps, have experienced a prick of jealousy on her own account—might even, by the aid of that great revelator of rivals' infirmities, have discerned that Miss Fessenden was not so cultivated as she seemed, and as she implied by a careful and non-committal remark or question here and there, now that Roland was launched on one of his enthusiastic discourses on literature and science; but as it was, the sis-

ter knew no pain in seeing him and her enjoying each other so profoundly. If any accusing thought of Leo, so direct and unmanaging, arose to torment her, possibly it was put down by a savage one of hatred of the "shop," of Utopia, of the "tenement,"—possibly by the justifying one that Miss Fessenden, as well as Leo, was fond of Roland.

"Not that Leo has been harmed any yet; but things of that sort"—the sort Miss Stuart was thinking of—"do happen, and of course it's hard; but how can anybody be required, under such circumstances, to do anything to hinder? Long engagements are very apt to end so. If it is hard, it would surely be the best thing all round." So reasoned Miss Stuart, watching the interested people whom she had brought together.

But, for some reason or other, Roland resolved, after that call, to avoid Miss Fessenden.

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"Do you pray?" asked the rector suddenly, during one of his interviews with Leo, turning a full gaze upon her.

"Oh, yes, I do," was the hearty answer. "I feel safe then—feel that, no matter how shocking my thoughts seem to me, they won't be allowed to hurt me at last. I shall always do that,—pray, I mean,—wherever these thoughts carry me. I shall always do that, because I'm sure that somehow or other there's help in it—help to be grand."

Leo used the expression that she and Roland understood so well, forgetting that to Mr. Thayer it might sound strange or even like cant.

"That's what we—Mr. Stuart and I—say when we mean living above low things hour by hour," she explained, blushing; "and I'm sure there's that kind of help in prayer. I don't know whether there's such a

God as I've always believed in, who hears and answers in the way I've always supposed, or whether the benefit all comes just from the aspiration in ourselves, working upon ourselves. Only I'm surer now — surer than I was the last time I saw you — that no law could be set aside in order that a prayer might be answered."

"My dear child," said Mr. Thayer, who, in his awakened fatherly concern, had often, since her mental affliction came upon her, addressed Leo thus,—"My dear child, do not so positively say what could not be done by God. There is no limit to His power. Mighty miracles have been performed by it. To be sure, there may be higher laws than we know anything about, whereby He has wrought these unusual phenomena which seem to have been wrought independent of law. All is, we cannot deny that the mighty works have been done. Therefore we must not say what cannot be done by Him; because with Him all things are possible."

This was intended as a reproof of Leo's presumptuous wanderings outside of scriptural sanctions, but it did not meet the arguments of increasing doubt.

"All things might be possible with God except to be untrue, it seems to me," she answered. "I don't think God would violate a law that He had made. I don't think He would contradict Himself. I think He would be untrue to do that. Mr. Thayer—" She hesitated, not certain how best to word what was always on her mind in these conversations. "I beg you not to think that I defy your counsels, or forget what is owing to you as a spiritual adviser and superior, when I oppose strongly. I do so because I want you to know how strongly these thoughts oppose *me* when I try to take the side you are taking."

The rector might pretty safely be trusted to put, of his own accord, the most charitable construction upon every-

thing, and never to be on the lookout for affronts to his dignity.

"I assure you," he said, "that I understand. I am only glad that you open to me all of your distraction. Do not fail to speak with equal freedom to One even more ready to hear, and how much more able to help! I shall not forget, either, to pray for you. Your mind appears *very* much disturbed—in a chaos. Lent will soon be here—"

"Lent! Another Lent!" exclaimed Leo. "I was coming to you in the same way last Lent! And I am not settled yet!"

Last Lent! That was the time, too, when Miss Stuart began going, with a special intent, to Miss Fessenden; but she had made progress toward her object.

"Lent is a very useful time in the Church year," said the pastor soothingly and hurriedly. "Do not weary of waiting upon the Lord. I think that if you pray and attend the Lenten services,—for God blesses and heals us through the use of appointed means,—it is not at all too much to believe that by Easter you will receive light."

The rector sat seriously regarding his patient, and totally untouched by any insinuation of ludicrousness in prescribing Lent, so entirely did he conform himself to systems and seasons.

"When we ask a special gift of God," he continued, "it is well to expect His answer. May I hope, then, that you will unite with me in prayer for yourself that you may be enlightened during Lent?"

"I shall pray for light," said she, "for I need it very much."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE LAST OF RETROSPECT.

AGAIN to turn back and review parallel time and its dealings with Roland: Somehow after that call of Miss Fessenden, Miss Stuart trumped up many pretexts for going to the beautiful house farther up the hill than hers. Sometimes she waited till her brother was at home, and called him very disobliging if he made any resistance to accompanying her. Sometimes Miss Fessenden was commissioned by Miss Stuart to do or ascertain something which would make later consultations necessary. These, owing to one cause or another, sometimes took place at Miss Stuart's, so that it was quite astonishing how frequently Roland was thrown, if but for a moment, in Miss Fessenden's way, and that, too, just after he had determined strictly to shun her; but when circumstances force one into a tempting place which one has vowed not to enter, one feels freer therein than if one were responsible for being there.

So Mr. Stuart, brought often, without his volition, into Miss Fessenden's intoxicating society, was less guarded than he otherwise would have been. He liked to receive homage from such a woman; and where was the impropriety, where the perfidy, in that?

Therefore he was not very sorry when, awhile after her first call and the other little calls since, he found the lady again in the parlor with his sister, just as she had

been on the initial occasion already recorded. Again he was somewhat fascinated by her elegant presence. Again he admired her, and admired her very much. Again it occurred to him, still more forcibly than ever, that she admired him and admired him very much. Again he was fired by her delicate flatteries. Again Miss Stuart thought of Leo, of whom Roland could see so little now, and said within herself, "Of course it's hard; but how can anybody be required, under such circumstances, to do anything to hinder?"

When Miss Fessenden would have taken her departure, Miss Stuart insisted upon her playing. "Roland is neglecting the piano nowadays, and I've heard no good music for many a week," she said.

Miss Fessenden, who was in the habit of making herself ready to accede to just such requests, and had decided before she left her seat at the instrument at home what compositions she should, with opportunity, perform, professed herself unprepared and taken by surprise.

"I fear I can give you no gratification," she said; but when Roland politely added his entreaty to his sister's, their visitor consented, as usual, to mortify herself for others. Leo could not play, though in simple music she often joined Roland with her fine voice. Miss Fessenden executed with the correctness acquired under the costly training of half a lifetime. The keys were liquid under her trickling touch.

Miss Stuart was so much pleased that Miss Fessenden did not find it in her heart to refuse a second performance. When this diversion was ended, it was dusk, and she could not be permitted to go out alone. After keeping her against her purpose, that was out of the question. Yet Roland shrank from showing the very ordinary civility of escorting her. Why? Did he feel, even now, signs of infirmity in himself — premonitions — warnings?



Perhaps not exactly that; but it may be he was seeing too little of Leo now to be quite as well able as he once would have been not to feel them.

At all events, Miss Fessenden was aware of a change in him. Something of affability, something of approachableness, had gone out of her companion of an hour ago. Possibly he did not like the last music—some objected to opera. It was like a cold plunge, after her recent lavings in the heated tide of his unconcealed pleasure in her, to hear him say to his sister, as they took leave, "I shall not be back at once. I will go to the shop to-night for Miss Dayne."

They were then already outside. Miss Fessenden did not see Mr. Stuart's hot face as he forced himself to say this, unnecessarily using the word "shop" because, even before this fastidious lady, he would not allow himself in the weakness of being ashamed of his future wife's occupation. Yet the blood burned his face. Miss Fessenden only heard his voice. It sounded harsh to her,—grating,—as though he thereby dismissed her after a passing hour's enjoyment, and turned now to his true enjoyment, to his constant attraction, to the woman that was his.

And this was the case. Miss Fessenden read accurately so far; but she did not read far enough. Within herself she queried with some discontent why it was she had never gained such a love—a faithful love, such as it seemed easy for other women to gain; oftentimes the common sort of women too, with all kinds of drawbacks and disadvantages. Now here was Roland Stuart loyal to Leo Dayne. Miss Fessenden had no acrimony toward Leo; but she wondered, just now, if she herself were too old to win such a devotion.

It was said that Miss Fessenden had met with more than one unhappy experience in love, and had been

treacherously deserted. If so, these things had not embittered her, nor did any mention of them ever escape her; only just now,—for she lived mostly in the present, and sought hour by hour the object of the hour,—observing with some sadness, possibly some pique, Mr. Stuart's unmistakable setting aside of herself, she kept wondering if she were too old to win a true heart to herself.

She did not stop to think whether she would care particularly for it if she did win it; but she wished she had it. It struck her now as a lonely thing to be without such a fastness in which to repose. It occurred to her now that it was a convenience, a luxury, which she had never possessed, and that it was cruel that she had been deprived of it. She liked to be well provided for, and to have everything, so to speak, that the market afforded.

However, she could not get into communication again with the almost silent man who stalked by her side; but she did not read far enough. This very closing of his doors against her was an admission of her power, an assertion of his own integrity, a wise measure of precaution; for Roland Stuart, unskilled in interpreting women, and believing that there was in them generally, as a matter of course, a peculiar divineness, was of all men the one least able not to be moved by the bewildering woman with whom he was almost perforce becoming associated. At the same time, he was of all men the one best able to curb, if he willed, and confine within limits, whatever emotions might be aroused in him. This he meant to do; but he had yet to discover that, among the multitude of women in the world, a man may hardly hope to find more than one genuine mate, that the marriages which come nearest to being perfect are hedged about and defended, not only in the fact that a satisfaction is found in them which calls for little bettering, but also in the fact that this satisfaction can rarely be found

by either party outside of the other; that graces, excellences, propitiousness of circumstances, do not and cannot make that nearly perfect marriage.

It is quite true, if not gratifying to human vanity, that a man like Roland Stuart can be suddenly brought, even by such an episode as the one of that afternoon, into at least momentary confusion, and into comparison-drawing between two women so incomparable as Leo and Miss Fessenden.

Yet Leo was of course dear to Roland; they understood each other well; they dwelt, as to their inner selves, in the same sphere; but he had lived too much on the mere surface of female society to realize the rarity, and hence the full preciousness, of such a friend, such a real companion, as Leo. He did not know that the average young woman who conversed agreeably, intelligently, or spiritedly in a tête-à-tête would probably not prove to be in so high a degree harmonious with him. It is by losing them that we learn the value of our possessions.

Meantime Roland and Miss Fessenden were pursuing their way. As a result of her late musings, the lady was really sober and cast down; but rallying, and governed always by the passion to please, and guided by a sort of infallible instinct which enabled her to navigate with safety the difficult straits of human moods,—to approach, clad in the mail of her daring sweetness, the most forbidding scowler,—she began caressing Mr. Stuart with her soft words, subtly filling him with the idea that his neglect could make her melancholy — wretched.

But he chose to be speechless for the most part. He was in that lofty humor wherein he stamped contemptuously on the small requirements of etiquette, and, planting himself triumphantly on their ruins, stood a law unto himself. Miss Fessenden, punctilious in the letter of politeness, asked herself, when she was alone, how it was

that he could do such things and yet not appear a boor, nor even discourteous.

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Leo was very tired that night—it had been a trying day; and Roland—her joy, her light, her compensation for every trying day—was so distant from her! Yet he stopped, as he almost always did, when they came to the little brook,—some of the same water that poured over the dam in Utopia,—which was always running on, chattering and talking to itself, as happily, he had once said, as if it, too, were telling of love—their love.

He stopped to-night, as usual, to listen to it, and they looked, too, as usual, at the light of the metropolis flaring on the sky; but he said nothing. He seemed so very far away!—and the same when they were in Leo's house, where he stayed awhile. Clasped hands did not unite them, touching lips did not bring them near. For some reason, he did not mention, even now, that he had been in Miss Fessenden's company.

"Oh, Roland!" cried Leo in distress, "I cannot find you! Where are you?" and, recalling sorrowfully that she was withholding her religious doubts from him, and admitting to herself that it was but just that her concealment should draw down upon it a punishment, she censured herself for having agreed with Mr. Thayer to privacy, and added, somewhat to Roland's mystification,—the time having not yet quite come for such self-accusatory sayings to weigh against her with him,—“But I ought to have known it would be so. I am the one to blame for it. Don't think I blame you; and don't blame yourself. It's all I—all I.”

And Roland did not blame himself. He thought he was rather praiseworthy in being so steadfast, so immovable. He knew that he was a desirable match, and that he might look much “higher,” in a worldly point of view,

than to Leo; but he did not really care to look higher. There stole upon him, even now, the memory of the trancing incense — rich, strong, musky — which Miss Fessenden had burned before him; but he had no notion of abandoning himself to its delicious potency. She had given him the thought that he could readily win her love; but he did not intend to win it. Perhaps it could not be reasonably expected that the thought should be unpleasant; but he again resolved to keep aloof from her.

Unfortunately, however, Miss Fessenden did not resolve to keep aloof from him. She resolved nothing. What she had said and done before Mr. and Miss Stuart immediately passed out of her mind. She would go through similar things to-morrow and the next day, perhaps. She was used to all that sort of acting. She at once became engaged again in her usual light pursuits adapted to the usual light ends.

Unfortunately, too, Miss Stuart did not resolve, after Miss Fessenden's last call, to withdraw entirely from Roland's love affairs. She could not refrain from setting a match to his pride by telling him that it was evident where Miss Fessenden's heart was — she loved him. He had not been mistaken then, he thought; for another noticed what he noticed.

Roland still meant as much as ever not to do any great evil. As time moved on and his seemingly unavoidable encounters with Miss Fessenden continued, he reflected that he had not done any. He did not know how close he was coming to it in the hidden recesses of the heart. He did not know that, relying on his strength, his wisdom, and in the habit of carrying his points with a high hand over his sister, he was making ready to tumble, a helpless dupe and captive, into her invisible meshes.

• The most perfect influence is unperceived. In open field he had beaten her, and compelled her to receive Leo.

That was settled to his satisfaction ; and Miss Stuart took cunning care not to let him think that she was anything but beaten and submissive still, even converted and satisfied. Hence he was unprepared for her conniving and strategy and secret undermining of his confidence in the lasting nature of Leo's affection for himself—as though Miss Stuart had noticed some signs of its decline.

This last was the only practicable vein for the sister to work in, as directly against Leo ; and she worked in this very little indeed. At present her conscience smote her whenever she did so at all ; but she had now taken so active and vigorous a part in Roland's love affair that she began to feel the fiercest desire to succeed,—a desire that carried her away,—and to be as jealous of Leo's influence on him as if she were working for her own instead of Miss Fessenden's matrimonial interests.

Her hints, however, if so they might be termed, were as faint as any that a raised eyebrow or unfinished sentence ever made ; but Roland was quick and sensitive, and it sorely hurt his pride to have Bertha imagine, even if she did not say, that Leo's love for him was waning at all. In fact, the sister could hardly have had a better vein through which to influence a man like Roland, with his haughty demands and quick jealousies. Bertha believed that, under the circumstances she had brought around him, there would be less of fervor in his feelings for Leo if he suspected there was less in hers for him.

It was, however, impossible now for Roland to credit that Leo did not love him ardently. Nevertheless, Bertha's hints, so faint that he did not regard them as hints, planted the least of small seeds in his mind—disposed him to be a little more alive thenceforth to merest trifles in Leo's speech and bearing toward himself ; and she was so oppressed by having a secret from him that her manner did begin to suffer unconscious change. This unhappi-

ness of hers about the screening from him of anything, which now from time to time issued in little penitential remarks such as had before somewhat puzzled Roland, began to aid, ever so slightly, those hints of Bertha—so faint that they did not strike him as hints.

Even the frequent visits from Miss Fessenden which were always following those first memorable prolonged ones, being represented to him as of her own arranging, did not arouse his suspicions against his sister. As to the slight unwomanliness into which her harmless liking for him was betraying Miss Fessenden, he could look with leniency upon that; and it was not wronging her, for did she not know that he was betrothed?

And Miss Fessenden was still putting her foot, with graceful certainty, on every step offered her by stray glimpses into his mind, by intuitional perception of what would please him, to climb into his favor. She even brought out from dusty places some books that she used to know a very little about at the time when she pretended to be learning them, and, when Mr. Stuart and his sister were expected, laid them, in scholarly confusion, on a stand in the parlor, and, when he picked up several, apologized for the litter.

"I have been looking over my old school-work," she said. "I wanted to find a quotation. Perhaps you will remember it. It begins—" Then she tried to recall two or three lines of Virgil, and succeeded, having made a study of them on purpose for the occasion; but she did this without much more feeling than she would read, before going to town to-morrow to visit an art collection, the subject "Painting" in the cyclopedia, so as to be prepared to give the impression to the friends who would be with her that she had a great fund of information in that province.

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"I want the truth!" Leo exclaimed to Mr. Thayer, in one of their later interviews. "At first I was only alarmed — horrified — afraid of losing hold of what I loved and had clung to ever since I was born. The very groundwork of my life was all slipping under me. Everything was tipping and heaving and tottering — there was no firm footing anywhere, it seemed. I ran from one support to another, crying to God not to take any of them away from me, because they were dear."

"May it be His will to answer that petition quickly!" interjected the rector.

"But now I've come not to fear,—no, not if everything of my old belief should go,—and to want only the truth, and to know that the old things ought not to be so dear if they are not true. If they are not true, then there are better things; and if they are true, I'm asking for them in asking for truth. That will be left somewhere, even if those things are not it; and I ought to desire truth most of all, and to know that it is best of all; because the Truth is God, and untrue things are opposed to Him. Yes, I want truth, and the untruth taken away," and she made that odd movement of her arms familiar enough to Roland, and not hard for anybody to read; "and I think that's a better mind than the other, isn't it? There can't be anything wrong in that, I thought,—can there? — for true things will not go."

"The truth, the whole of truth," said Mr. Thayer musingly, "is very broad and deep and high, and the eyes that look are defective and easily deceived; so that really true things might, through the imperfection of the eyes of a man, come to look false to him — might, in that sense, 'go.' Therefore it is not left entirely to the judgment of a man to decide what the truth — divine truth — is. God has established what it is in His Word, which He has consigned to the keeping of the Church, its expositor; and



God has left us in free-will, and He asks us to will to trust Him at His Word, even as a little child trusts; and that would certainly be without suspicious interrogating."

"I can't think it is leaving us in free-will," said Leo deprecatingly, "to show us inconsistency, and yet give us a mind that rejects inconsistency."

"You must remember that the Bible is a book for all time; so there may seem to us of this present time to be discrepancies, because we don't see all time."

"But if it is for all time, why not for this present time?"

Leo was being mercilessly pushed now by her doubts.

"We must be patient with what may appear to be the haze and blindness, if they trouble us, and even with our own stumblings and misgivings, if we have them, meantime keeping on, persevering, with supplication, in the path of God's commandments. They are a sure guide in all practical affairs. The Church is the earthly representative of God, the visible exponent of His will, its very existence in the world a marvel unless He came and established it; set up for the very purpose of directing men's otherwise chartless goings, for the very purpose of being an ever-open home, an ever-loving mother, receiving indeed all who will fitly come, her special mission nevertheless being to hold up and safely lead her children who are confused, who have lost their bearings, who can no longer go alone, and know only to cast themselves into her embracing arms, secure of being borne on in the right road until the weary feet find again their own proper strength and the dazed wanderer comes again to himself. It is the peculiar office of the Church to point out the way to her children when they do not know the way themselves, when they are in peril—in straits."

Leo was silent, and Mr. Thayer resumed:

"It is then that her authoritative voice, heard above

the roar of wave and wind, sounds clearest and sweetest—then, if ever, that it should be heeded and her beacon be prized as the only hope. It is something to be thankful for that you, dear child, have not to seek her for the first time now, in the hour when you are buffeted and wavering, but find your hand already clasped in hers, yourself already accustomed to receive her teachings and familiar with her mind and way.”

Mr. Thayer was a good “fisher of men,” and he knew that persuasion was the most powerful means of influencing Leo; and, like most people, he spoke, both as to manner and matter, much as he was moved to do by his knowledge of his listener.

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Roland never spoke now to Leo about going to that other city and taking her with him; but this might be only because it was so doubtful and distant a matter. Much more than a year had passed since he led her to the hall map and pointed out the black dot of a city; but he had intended his engagement to be a long one. He had of late been failing somewhat in paying attentions, and that was not the worst: the good had gone out of the attentions he did pay. He still believed in her love for him. How could he, after all, doubt it when he looked at her? Yet when one is himself failing, it becomes easier to think that another is.

Meantime Leo, still lifting anxious eyes to heaven, and praying for light to come that she might never have to hurt Roland by turning unbeliever, thought dolefully, humbly, that she knew the whole cause of all the trouble—it was in her.

And indeed Mr. Stuart had, even thus far, said nothing, done nothing, directly unfaithful to Leo; but, with his peculiar defencelessness in the hands of an enchantress

like Miss Fessenden, he had, before he knew it, confounded the latter's image with Leo's. Confusion was reigning in his affections. Moreover, it was quite astonishing how *very* seldom, "comparatively," he was seeing Leo now — his meetings with Miss Fessenden were coming to interfere with his meetings with her. Had he actually so soon defined his "always"?

Miss Fessenden herself had, thus far, said nothing, done nothing, directly unsuitable to the circumstances. She was only very, very sweet, because there was no longer any danger of being misunderstood. As to Miss Stuart, she was still hinting — though rather more variedly and with less conscience; and she was committed to that course for the future.

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Leo, beginning now to be filled with such intensity of love and longing as a sick man feels when there slowly dawns in him the knowledge that his disorder is such as may compel the saying of everlasting farewells with some infinitely dear one, was dueling, hand to hand at last, with doubt.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE SETTLEMENT.

How would the current turn? Was the drift of this exercised soul toward the haven and the moorings whence it had separated, or would it be carried over the bar, and go out to sea, beyond hail and beyond sign?

The dutiful clergyman, keeping, all the while, steadfast watch from the firm shore of his faith, and calling "Return! Return!" at length felt despairingly that his voice was no longer able to reach the vanishing object of his care. His parishioner was slowly, slowly crossing the outermost bound of security, into the wide, stormy, buoyless, unlighted ocean of direct denial and disjunction. Leo had probably thought more intensely than she could have done but for the need of telling Roland.

And how was it with her? Had she no sense of danger, in view of forsaking propitious skies and safe anchorage? Would she have no sense of loss in saying farewell to long associations and well-known ways? Would she go joyfully, with no realization of the benefits she was leaving, no terror of the track that stretched its untried distance before her, no sorrowful back-looking, no sinking presages of loneliness and desolation, no deliberations of expediency, no fear of a few persons harder to face, for various peculiar reasons, than the whole world (we all have such a circle), no listening to plausible excuses from herself for remaining still in the usual course,—was

it thus, with undaunted self-sufficiency, with unloving adieux, that she would turn her back upon every pleader, whether within or without, whether human or circumstantial?

No; but it came about at last that Leo Dayne knew herself to be no longer truly of the Church. She knew that much, though she was still far from being a ripe Liberal. Faithful to her ancestry, she had been a Puritan of Puritans. It is a long journey from that little inland station to the wide coast of freedom. Nevertheless, for her was settled at least that mighty controversy between the traditional and the rational which, though learned dispute and intricate argumentation settle not, has found a most gracious settlement in many minds equipped with the three essentials, independence, honesty, ability; and, by the way, there is wonderfully little difference between the decisions reached by minds naturally thus equipped and those reached by like minds when enriched with all the learning of the schools.

Thought, petition, study; tears, agonizings; church-going and clerical instruction; early training and present attachment,—all could not prevent her from arriving at conclusions at variance with the very groundwork of evangelicalism. By such imperceptible degrees, running far back, had this great revolution taken place that she hardly wondered or was dismayed in the hour when, boldly exploring her own heart and determined to call by right names whatever she found there, she owned that she was no longer a doubter — faced the fact that she had entered into clear and absolute disagreement.

But because she did not believe that God was ever born of woman, because she did not believe that blood can atone for sin, she was no scoffer at any majestic character, any beneficent life, any humane work. Because she did not believe anything offensive to intelligence,

anything that appealed to weak credulity or blind superstition, she was not hindered from lifting up desire for strength sufficient unto her day and trial, even as it is recorded of a martyr brother of us all that he obtained strength sufficient unto his. Looking about her from the landing-place that she had at length reached, and perceiving now what appalling consequences to herself might follow her apostasy, she was sensible of even a quickened, if ominous, fellowship with that pathetic sufferer of the persecutions and misconceptions of smaller men — clung with a warmer pressure of sympathy to the hands of every strong example, every moral conqueror, held down from the written past to inspire us in crucial times.

Roland! Roland! Oh, if she had only told him at the very beginning! That would have been a comparatively mild shock. And now it had been so long! Her heart stood still when she counted up the months since she first told Mr. Thayer — more than enough of them to make a year and a half, to say nothing of her earlier slight stirrings of skepticism.

To be sure, she had many times, especially in the last year, spoken to Roland on religious subjects in such a tone as to signify that her understanding did not assent to certain accepted propositions; but at those times he had merely stated what the correct view was, as though she sought only knowledge to absorb.

Roland was somewhat in the habit of making statements and imparting information as one qualified to settle points; and he rather expected a point once settled by him to be settled once for all. So, since he would not perceive in the least how it was, but set down the very dogmas that were hardest to her exactly as if to hear them was to hear an axiom, and because Mr. Thayer still had her promise that she would wait a little longer, Leo, harassed equally by her unhingement and her silence

about it, had said nothing plainer — and for one other reason besides: was Roland loving her less?

Sometimes a suspicion had shot through her that he was under some control that acted against their love; in short, a suspicion that Miss Stuart's professions of friendliness were, after all, a feint, — Leo suspected no one else, Roland himself least of all, — and that he, not detecting craft, was finally being subjugated by it.

Not that he was really unloving, not that he was loth to honor Leo before all, not that he was backward in reassuring her; but it was the momentary abstraction, the fleeting frown on the brow, the hasty "Nothing!" in response to inquiring anxiety, that caused her apprehension. One endowed with intuition has not to stay for demonstration. To such, that comes too late. That is for the literal, affected by no insight into hid things.

But Leo, though she sometimes distrusted Miss Stuart, would not accuse her to Roland, not wishing to disturb the harmony which she had taken pains to promote between the brother and sister. She believed that Miss Stuart's influence, if mischievous, would never be able to inflict permanent injury upon Roland's and her own love, and wished to preserve that love rather by fortifying it within than by making onsets upon its foes without.

Nevertheless, the knowledge that, apparently from some cause or other besides the subtle one in herself, — how far she was from guessing the whole cause! — Roland was not the same had made her more willing to delay unveiling to him her religious struggle. Might it not be, she had said to herself in the earlier stages of her wavering, as Mr. Thayer thought: that she would be brought again into full union with the Church, which was still of her affection, though not quite of her whole-hearted faith?

"Why cannot I believe? Help me to believe!" — this had been her cry in the first days of this trouble

and involvement; and what wonder if, standing then in the warmth and color that filled the Church of the Intercessor; moved by the unsearchable power of music; surrounded by smiling countenances as yet unclouded with any imagination that she was not entirely a sister-church-woman; listening to the pleading shepherd of this flock; longing to retain her place and share in all this geniality, this kindly disposed company, among these banded workers; and, above all, remembering that theirs was essentially the creed of her lover,—what wonder if she said then, passionately, “I *will* believe”?

Those days were now over. She had beaten a passage-way out of that condition into one of abiding readiness to follow wherever the light might lead, and, at the end of many conflicts, found herself rejecting the fundamental articles of her early belief. That there was more than one line of action open to her now she never dreamed.

It was for Mr. Thayer, who could not credit that this was to be her lasting state, to suggest another. Of course she lost no time in acquainting him with the result of her long strife. Sad was the rector’s heart. He still thought precisely as he always had thought—that time, still more time, would—must—set her right. How could it be otherwise?

“My dear child,” he exclaimed, rising in emotion when he began to comprehend her in this first meeting after she had become fully decided, “you cannot disbelieve! You do not understand yourself. It must be that, deep down in your consciousness, you rely on the atonement made by Jesus. These quibbles of yours must be merely on the surface—proceeding from ambition to be critical and speculative, rather than from any well-established doubts respecting the ‘only begotten Son of God’”—here the rector, who had happened to use a clause of his favorite form of creed, found his tongue going on, almost of its



own accord, with the oft-repeated words, which sounded solemn and impressive now, as he slowly pronounced them, standing, in his sorrow and concern, before Leo, and charging each measured phrase with the weight of his own unequivocal concurrence in its meaning—"the only begotten Son of God;—begotten of his Father before all worlds;—God of God;—Light of Light;—very God of very God;—begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;—by whom all things were made;—who for us men—and for our salvation—came down from heaven—and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary—and was made man—and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried—and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures—and ascended into heaven—and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead;—whose kingdom shall have no end."

The rector looked at Leo as though he half expected to behold a transformation, wrought by the efficacy of this masterly synopsis of the truth; but she had not been moved by what seemed to him an irresistibly enticing presentation of her former faith to re-embrace it. She had cast it off after too much thought and too much anguish for that.

She had been unsettled long enough. She had grieved long enough. She had groped in darkness long enough. Now the fogs had in a measure broken away, now the questioning was over for the present, now the hesitation as to her course had disappeared; and, no matter what conclusion others might have arrived at through similar means, she must stand by hers. But how to make Mr. Thayer realize that what she expressed was unmistakably a *conviction*?

While he was reciting the passage from the creed, she

had sat very still, with her eyes fastened reflectively on the study carpet. Now she raised them so suddenly, and fixed them so full on Mr. Thayer, who had been observing her vigilantly, that he almost started.

For an instant the two gazed silently, searchingly, at each other—the conscientious and determined Christian and the equally conscientious and determined rejecter of evangelical beliefs; and the clergyman saw in Leo's air what had never been there before—that he could not hereafter govern her for her good as he had when she was a less advanced schismatic.

Probably nothing could now prevent her from making ill-advised avowals, under a mistaken conception of duty and the pressure of that youthful haste which thinks it has reached a finality. In that instant, the man of unswerving trueness to a duteous purpose recognized his match in her. Without removing her steady eyes, she said slowly—for she must make him know all by some means—

“I pray you, heed what I am going to say: I no longer believe one statement of that quotation from the creed.”

After this there was quiet for a long time in the cozy study. Leo would not diminish the force of her one sharp declaration by making others, and the rector was busy within himself. Perhaps the tenor of his thoughts was indicated by his next ruminating remarks:

“You have nothing to substitute for this that you would renounce.”

“The natural sense of right and the pursuit of truth,” said Leo, with shaking lips, for her firmness was costing her something—was going to cost her more. “Is not that better than accepting untruth—or what one believes is untruth?”

Without noticing her, apparently without hearing, Mr. Thayer continued as though thinking aloud—

"Once a child of the Church, always a child of the Church—that is a cheerful saying. Wrong and misguided as you are, she will, in time, bring you again—I feel the assurance of it—into perfect unity with herself; for you have been grafted into her mystical body."

"Of course I shall leave the Church," said Leo. "Even Roland will want me to when he knows."

"Leave it!" exclaimed Mr. Thayer, whose thoughts had not yet traveled so far as this.

"Of course I cannot continue as though I were one of you when I am not. I have stayed too long already, making no sign. I'm afraid it wasn't right. Oh, Roland!" This last was scarcely less than a groan.

"You could not properly have done otherwise, child. In consulting your pastor, you did all that you were required to do. Even now you will be carrying your principle of openness to extremes if you insist upon precipitate action and irrevocable measures; for, if I understand you, you would not assert it to be impossible for you ever to come back, but that you believe it to be impossible?"

"I believe it to be utterly impossible," said Leo.

"Yes, you believe it to be; and, false as your ideas are, I believe that you desire to lead a right life—desire to be as useful a woman, and do as little harm, as you can."

"I do," said Leo, with great earnestness.

"And do you not see what the consequence will be of taking the step that you propose—of parting, even temporarily, from the Church? You are in a situation of risk."

Leo knew what Mr. Thayer's glance meant. It was a kind, a compassionate glance, but it somehow reminded her, in a flash, of what she herself had thought: that her falling away might be taken by many as proving the

truth of all the hints against her that had ever pervaded the air — those insinuations of which she had told him so long ago, in that very room, when she offered to withdraw from the confirmation class; and now this looked probable to another!

"Your case," he resumed, "is different, very different, from what it would be if your doubts" — the rector still clung to this word — "were the only thing to be considered. You are particularly called upon to use discretion and moderation — not only for your own sake, but for the sake of others."

It was a long talk that evening, and a very plain and unreserved one on both sides; but Leo's mind was made up. Let come what would, — and she was in a kind of excited hopelessness now about Roland, — she must stand for what she was. And Roland, she repeated, would sanction nothing else.

Mr. Thayer suited his speech to his unfailing belief in her ultimate return; but his arguments were only those to which she had listened before from her own trembling spirit, that shrank from the ordeal presented to it by conspiring circumstances; they were those which she had wrestled with in stillness and darkness, and found a sure answer to.

"You will," said Mr. Thayer, "annul all the good of your past by making it appear now to have been evil."

"Yet I dare not be a hypocrite," she replied, "and expect good to come of it. I do not think deception could be blessed; but if I make my ways plain, then I shall have a right to hope that they will be vindicated at last, and hurt no one."

"But," urged the clergyman, "you will be cut off from the means of doing much excellent work. You must admit that the Church is at least an organization affording opportunity for the systematic performance of chari-

table labors. Think," said he, "of the beautiful characters in the Church upon whom you are turning your back with apparent contempt. Look at Miss Fessenden, among us! She seems a sunbeam in everybody's path. I sometimes think the people of the parish almost worship her"—with a little apologetic air for the people of the parish; "and I know, and have been meeting all my life, so many—many—holy people! Of course they have little failings; but when we notice these, we should think not so much of them as of the prayers, the fastings, the struggles, it may have cost such to repel the worse forms of sin."

"Still I cannot convince myself," said Leo, "that any labors performed in co-operation with characters never so beautiful can be truly worthy—not if performed in a voluntarily accepted false position. The fruits, however fair, of a tree poisoned in the sap—that is what I should be if I kept silence now—are to be distrusted, I think; and service done while any crookedness that can be made straight is not corrected cannot be commendable—it seems so to me."

Mr. Thayer was, for a moment, about to give up striving against this earnest, erring soul; but only for a moment. He must show at least as much persistence as Satan. Miss Dayne must not be lost to the Church, even for a time. At all events, she must be kept still within its influence, to the end that her final re-establishment might be hastened.

Moreover, if he released his hold entirely while there was the slightest possibility of retaining it, he would be in a measure responsible not only for her spiritual wanderings, but for the temporal ills which he apprehended that she, with her strained notions about being bound to declare herself instantly, would inevitably bring down upon herself. There was also to be considered the bearing upon others of her example.

"I respect," said he, "your uncompromising fidelity to what you conceive to be duty; but I do not respect your opinions. I do not respect your wisdom. Your opinions are wrong—wrong—wrong; how wrong it is for the future to reveal to you, as it will do, God grant! And as to wisdom, you have—none. I had almost said, too, that you have no mercy."

He was aware that he was beginning now to use the last instrument left in his hands.

"Mercy?" Leo said inquiringly.

"You are merciless to your mother and brothers."

"They all say I must be honest!" interrupted Leo.

"Will not what you contemplate doing impose great discomfort upon them? Will it not, most likely, injure them in the eyes of others? Above all, you are merciless toward your espoused husband, whom you will at least subject to the suffering of having you brought into notoriety, if not disrepute. I know not how he would be affected by it. This is what you will do; and why is all this infelicity, not to say mischief, to be induced? Simply that you may do that of which your unassisted judgment approves. Take no offence: we are speaking freely, and I am still your pastor."

"Have no such fear!"

"Do you not, then, discern that what we called your allegiance to supposed duty is, after all, when closely scrutinized, a supremely selfish thing—a thing to be mistrusted? Can you not see that to sacrifice something of your will for the sake of others is the course of true dignity—the really noble course? It is not as if you considered us bad people engaged in baleful works that you must proclaim against."

Here Leo began to deny ever having had such a thought; but there was no need of speaking. Mr. Thayer understood her feeling; and, though these were religious dis-

putants, here was not, on either side, any of the bitterness, any of the unfairness, any of the misrepresentation, whose roots run down to hell. The rector was not one of those worshipers of Jesus who abuse everybody that does not worship Jesus. He had not so learned his master.

"What good, then," he continued, rapidly and eagerly, "will it do anybody but yourself, think you, to publish yourself as an apostate? Will a single being in the world be happier or better? You say *you* shall be. Ah, there, I fear, is the secret! Human selfishness is wily, and clothes itself in beautiful garments, and calls itself by praiseful names. You say that you crave all best things of the interior life; and I believe you. Now beware of the voice which persuades you that trampling on others' sensibilities and interests is in any way fine, in any way exalted. You are too reckless and too self-conscious."

"I know I am generally; but now —"

"You are making up your mind as though you were alone; but you are not alone. Therefore you make it up on incorrect grounds. We must conduct ourselves according to what *is*. To do otherwise is to be deranged. What should we think of a jury that refused to hear evidence except on one side,—in other words, refused to look at a case as it is,—and, announcing their verdict, declared that conscience forbade their giving any other? Yet that is just what you are doing."

"I have tried to look on all sides."

"But you have only counted the cost to yourself: you have not counted the cost to others. And as to the cost to yourself, it is necessary and right to exercise discretion here where we find ourselves placed. When the time comes for us not to exercise it, we shall be removed out of surroundings that call for it; but now we are explicitly commanded to avoid *the appearance* of evil. Then think

of an individual lifting himself up against the mighty following of Christ, against the settled order, against the most learned and most honorable and most eminent men,—lifting himself up against all these, and venturing to have a contrary opinion! Be prevailed upon to reconsider your determination!”

Leo was silent. Here was Mr. Thayer, one of the most charitable of men, accusing her of the same sins and weaknesses which others had so often imputed to her. *Was* she wrong in holding on in the direction indicated by her own moral sense, when everybody else thought she was going astray? This was what she was asking herself.

Mr. Thayer's utterances had sent a ray of hope to her heart. If she could avoid the thorny road she had resolved to press into, if everything could remain as it was, and she be truly grand just the same, and even more truly grand than in following the hard way, what a peace could settle upon her! How tranquilly she could lie down to-night, conscious that she was to stay in the old religious home; disturbed by no uneasy dream of coming trouble; no start of anxiety obtruding itself upon calm sleep; and, infinitely above all, knowing that the dreadful doubt about how Roland would receive all this need be thought no more about!

She was thoroughly tired in body and soul. She could do nothing by halves, and the extreme nervous strain to which she had been exposed of late was telling perceptibly upon her. Now that she sat wrapped in thought, Mr. Thayer noted the worn look in her eyes and the weariness of her whole aspect. It touched him. It showed him what he had never thought much of before—that this had been a bitter, desperate contest to her, that she had been fighting with more than “beasts at Ephesus.” He never had observed till now how changed she was.



"Poor child! Poor — child!" he exclaimed pityingly; just as pityingly as if she had indeed been his own "child."

Leo flushed and quivered. It was of no use now to try to hold back. Bowing her face forward on her hands, she no longer restrained her feelings. The rector came and laid his hand on her head. There was being put to the proof, by the rolling in of this great gulf between him and her,—so like in kindness and honor, yet so unlike now in sentiment and route,—the ability of his merely human brotherliness to span it.

"Oh, Roland," moaned Leo woefully, at length, as if addressing him, "I love you so! I wouldn't differ from you—if I could help it."

A deepening despondency as to the issue with him was shaking her in its rough grasp. Must she lose all that was priceless in this change? However widely one might rove inside the borders of orthodox creeds, Roland's catholicity was elastic enough to cover him; but outside those borders, how would it be? Rejecting the alleged bodily manifestation of God, worshiping Him wholly in spirit, not at all in flesh,—could Roland bear this?

Yet now that her mind was so far clear, how could she disguise that mind, as Mr. Thayer would have her, in the hope of obtaining another? For how should he who thinks he has received one revelation wait for a second before setting forth the first?—and to her it had become certain truth that these things she was leaving were untruth. No, there was no such repose for her.

The rector's hand, touching her head again like a benediction, conveyed more sympathy than any words could.

"This has been a hard battle for you, poor child!" he said at last, unaffectedly.

After this neither spoke for some time, during which the clergyman communed with himself. He was begin-

ning to feel that there was a genuineness and reality in Leo's views as worthy of respect as the genuineness and reality of opposite ones. He was beginning to feel that he had exceeded his just prerogative in being so masterful with one as sincere as himself.

He was still as sure as ever that she would — must — turn again to the Church; but he was beginning to question his right to interfere so strenuously with the workings of any mind — to experience some awe before the imposing spectacle of a tried soul making deliberate choice of unpopularity, loss of standing, ostracism, and endangering every dear thing, for honesty's sake.

"Perhaps," he said, slowly and dubiously, "I have insisted too much. Perhaps I have meddled impertinently with the divine plan for you; been in consternation, and put out my arm to save, when I ought rather to have depended on the almighty arm, that can infallibly rescue, even from the most deplorable errors, whom it will."

Again the rector was absorbed in thought. When he spoke, it was in a more determined voice.

"I can now," he said, "only direct you to the Mighty Counselor; but will you allow me time to consult the bishop before you take any step? I shall regard it as a personal favor if you consent to wait for this. You know he comes on Sunday, to confirm. Perhaps I should have consulted him before. If he should think you ought to — leave the Church, of course I can but cease to oppose you; though I cannot see," here Mr. Thayer was evidently moved by a strong revival of his old desires in this matter, "how he can think so, in view of everything — your circumstances, your family, your engagement —"

"You don't mean that I could keep this from Mr. Stuart till then!" cried Leo.

The rector did not answer, for he distrusted himself to direct this case further, and he would not risk giving harmful advice.

"I could not do that," she continued. "I shall tell him at once. There never could be any marriage worth the name, with concealment between us." (If Roland had heard that, would it have shamed him?) "I should not expect that it could be really blessed, if I had such a secret from him; and if I had to part from him, I would rather lose him outwardly by telling him than inwardly by not telling him. For your satisfaction, I will wait till you have seen the bishop before I speak to any but Roland—I have waited so long already that I can scarcely make it worse; but I know that I can never rest in doing what I think is wrong because others think it is right. I have tried, and I cannot. I have been over all the arguments for and against a thousand times; and I have decided." Here she appeared to forget that she had a listener, and to be speaking within herself, and added: "I will keep the faith."

"Keep the faith! You are denying the faith. You are recreant to the faith."

"I meant that, come what may, I will tell what I am, and take the consequences; and when Roland knows, he will say,—I am sure of it,—‘Stand before everybody for what you are.’ I don’t know what besides he will say."

"I thank you that you consent to my wish in delaying a little longer yet, with all but him. You will be at church on Sunday?"

"Probably; for my farewell."

"Oh, child—child—child," said the rector sadly, "you know not what you do—you know not what you do."

Yet, though she had come to a conclusion, she had, for hours after that last talk with Mr. Thayer, to fight over once more his arguments, presented now by that most potent advocate, one’s dear interests. He had foreseen clearly trials and miseries for her which she had indeed

feared, but which generosity in measuring others had led her to think might not come. She had withstood him to his face; but alone, in her own bare chamber, with the shadows and shuddering of night upon her, his words were the confirmation of her worst vague apprehensions, the death of every tenacious hope. Temptation assailed her as it had never assailed before — assailed as he assails who knows that he is employing the last possible opportunity.

“It is not yet done!” cried Self-interest. “There is yet time! The people are not yet agog! Why not give up standing out about what, after all, is of so little moment? Who cares whether you believe exactly so and so, or not? Are you of so much consequence that it is a matter of vital importance that you should publish what is the precise shade of your opinions? Do you suppose there are no differences of sentiment in individuals of the same communion? How do you know to a nicety what views the persons across the aisle from you hold? Perhaps they don’t think it worth while to tell — don’t think that everybody and everything depend upon their giving a definition of the meaning they may choose to put upon words, nor upon their expounding any reservations they may happen to have.

“You revere Jesus of Nazareth, as his record stands: what matters it what you believe concerning his nature or the mode of his advent? You honor his practical teachings: did not he himself say, ‘If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples’? Have you, then, no sanction for still keeping on? Look at this affair in the broad spirit of the master, not in the narrow one of sect; and if it is truthfulness that you desire,—that is, if you would take this step for the sake of seeming to be what you are,—remember that by it you will inevitably place yourself in a falser light than you are now in; for you

will have no chance to make minute explanations, but will be taken simply for a scoffer, not only at all religion, but very likely at all morality. Are you more righteous than Mr. Thayer, that you should refuse to walk in a way that he would take?

"And if all other considerations fail to move you, the one thought of Roland Stuart, your betrothed husband, ought to be enough. Do you owe nothing to him? Has he no right to expect some self-rejection of you, some sacrifices of your personal will on his account? Even if he were sure to forgive you, are you justified in making yourself despised while you belong to him?

"Forget this small matter, which, because it concerns yourself, appears so large; rejoice Mr. Thayer by notifying him that you have altered your decision, continue a respected and therefore more serviceable member of society, and, by silence, avoid torturing, perhaps estranging, your lover."

What! and lie to him—and everybody! Act a lie multiplied by every hour of every day of every year!

So, after those wise and complicated pleadings, came another voice, with only one simple question to put, one plain precept to urge:

"Is it being **TRUE** to stay in the Church and be still? Be **TRUE**!"

And this was the voice whose ring touched Leo like a strain of music, inspiriting her wavering heart with strength,—this the unambiguous course that won her irresistibly, drawing from her lips the victorious exclamation, "I will be true—and trust!"

So now she was panting to see Roland and tell him all. How long she had waited for this liberty! Now it was here! She was going to shake off, at last, every disguise, going to get close to Roland again, at least in the sense of having nothing, nothing, hidden from him. Then

whatever else was wrong might come right! He would know all before Sunday.

But of late Roland had had so much more than ever before to keep him away from Leo! He was not so sure as once to come, even when he had engaged to. Just now the closing examinations where he taught were bringing much additional care to him, and she must be satisfied, he said, and not trouble or upbraid him. To this, alas! had his sister's crafty, plausible, sugar-coated insinuations, and the sweet sorceries of a vain, light thing that looked a self-renouncing woman, brought him now. But Leo thought, "He certainly will not stay away the three whole days before Sunday."

No, he did not. He came—but only for a hurried moment. She could not detain him.

"But I have something that I must say!" she ejaculated.

"Some other day must do," he said, going.

"Then give me a little time before Sunday—I pray you."

"Well"—and he was gone.

How far was Leo from imagining that he would have leisure enough, that very evening, to spend several hours in Miss Fessenden's home and company—hours filled with soft enjoyment and luxurious ease! We can usually find time to seek the things we most desire.

So Leo expected Roland—most confidently on Saturday evening; and even when that evening had turned into night, she still expected him. Then she expected him Sunday morning. She even expected him as she went slowly to church. He had occasionally met her at that time. They had a trysting-place for it. He was not there. Alack! the waiting and the watching that women do!

Mechanically she went on, and into the church,—the

beautiful Church of the Intercessor,—and into her seat. The pews were almost empty yet. As the people were coming in, she sat in the shady hush — wondering — wondering. It — everything — appeared all a dream. Her face looked more haggard and her eyes more tired, here in the stained dusk. Was she really leaving this church? How strange it all seemed! Was she any farther away from Jesus — the Intercessor — than she ever had been? She could not dogmatize now, but her aspirations and ideals were every whit as high as ever.

She gazed up at the figure in the chancel window — the representation of one of the most unliteral of the sons of men, who long ago counted worthless the ascriptions of praiseful lips. At that moment, stealing organ-notes and a voice spoke for him, in an opening “voluntary” of the choir which on the first day of Leo’s attendance, as now on her last, made music that sounded like the angels’. The voice sang what the Intercessor had long ago divined of the Great First Cause — “God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in *truth*.”

Leo’s eyes filled. She knew that now in this her hour she understood better than ever that storied great one who had walked determinedly even to his death, because he would not stay in the Church and be still. She appreciated to the fullest now the glory of that blazing example of dissent and innovation which has lit and eased, through sympathy, the path of many a martyr, recognized and unrecognized, in many a differing cause and situation, and will light and ease the path of many another, until the world shall have become so free, so unbigoted, so truth-seeking, that something besides the blood of its deliverers can unseal its ears to their divine messages — appreciated the glory of that blazing example as only those can who ascribe to the victim and victor no almighty attributes. But her mind in its reaction was as clear, relig-

iously, as the heavens freshly washed by storms, and her heart as peaceful, religiously, as the field beneath them which sanguinary foes, having ended the decisive fray, have forever left to grassy repose. She had lost her old creed; but there is a faith as large as God and all His works, and as steadfast, which those may best find who hold no smaller faith. Now, however, Leo's womanly heart was chiefly exercised with what is worth more than all creeds—love.

Poor, wronged Roland! Dear Roland! Here was the misery now. If only she had been telling him little by little! She said that a great many times. She did not think of Mr. Thayer's part in holding her back as any exculpation. She did not remember that she could bitterly blame him to Roland for this state of things. She did not remember that his well-meant urgency had been such as almost to compel submission—that every inch of her way to her present freedom to speak had been contested by his iron resistance. She remembered only her own fault, remembered only that she had been secret, and she planned no defence save a clean confession and a sorrowful suing for pardon.

To be sure, her membership with the Church was not yet dissolved, but whether formally out of it or not, she knew that she was out of it in inner reality; and it did not occur to her to take advantage of the fact that her heresy was still a secret, that no action had yet been taken, that her name was not yet stricken out. To her unequivocal mind, these circumstances presented no excuse, no refuge. All that she saw was, that she had undergone a grave change, and had withheld the knowledge of it from Roland, and that the heartiest contrition and humility became her, while forgiveness on his part would be magnanimity.

He, so strenuous about sincerity, so contemptuous of



displays, so bent upon looking below appearances and upon making valuations without reference to them,—Roland himself, as she had so often assured herself, would have countenanced no course less upright than that which she had resolved upon. The one terrible thing about it, then, and the only one that he would not approve, was, that she had not told him before.

For one like Leo, not prone to take umbrage, carelessly conciliated, and with limitless good-nature toward all sorts of trespassers, it is hard to believe that another will be different. She knew that when he chose Roland was fixed and relentless; but she thought that perhaps he would see that conformity and nonconformity matter little, if one have but a good intent,—that true unity consists in oneness of purpose, not in oneness of means.

She did not realize how far she had traveled into the Promised Land—how intimate she had become, in the spirit, with that company, issued from every class, who, knowing themselves destitute of positive and infallible disclosures, judge no man, erect no proud barriers of exclusion, recognize, with all its consequences, that in the constitution of this world men and manners and times and morals have been made *to differ*; who say not, even to the vilest, "I am holier than thou"; who write "Unknown" on that interdependent, complex thing, the soul, and leave it to the Author of it to fathom: but she knew that there was doubt—a dreary doubt—as to how Roland would be affected by her story; and he would surely come to-day—no later.

Sitting in the dim church; bathed in its swelling music; watching the stately march of its ritual; witnessing the confirmation of the eager band of in-going recruits crowding up to enlist for themselves as Christ's "faithful soldiers and servants" unto their "life's end"; looking about on the congregation, so safe and certain and

respectable, and so strong in their numbers and their wealth; listening to the gray-haired bishop, setting forth in the most powerful of all styles — that which asserts incidentally, and assumes that nobody can controvert — the very beliefs which she, Leo Dayne, rejected with all her might, — it was then that there rushed upon her a sense of the stupendous power of the Church, of the weakness of the individual, of the hopelessness of any attempt to be generally understood in opposition: but no regrets came to disturb for her that peace which flows from a settled resolve to obey, at all hazards, the highest moral behests one hears.

If only Roland "held" her! But if he did not —

Of a surety, the prestige, the popularity, the phalanxed might, — what she left, — Roland would not regret. She hoped — a little. She tried to quell the tremor that was in all her body, and to moisten her dry lips. Ah! it was a fearful and increasing doubt, spite of the little and waning hope; but nothing — nothing — should prevent her from telling him all. There was comfort in that, no matter if he refused all association with her thenceforward.

And, sitting there in the dim church, a new thought startled her: "Am I now just what I heard, so long ago, that Jack was — an 'infidel'?"

That was an odd thought. Yet it was odd that she had not had it before. Still, "infidel" seemed a hard name — a wrong name.

There was no need to hear from Mr. Thayer what the bishop thought of her case. She knew before he had finished his address to the newly confirmed. "If," said he, as he proceeded, "any prove recreant, apostate, and deny the Lord, as we pray that you, dearly beloved, never may, so will he also deny them before his Father in heaven; and let such go out and away from us, nor count

themselves in any sense his followers. Let them find themselves another home among their own, and another name, and not disgrace the holy name by wearing it. The Church wants them not—she spues them out of her mouth; for ‘Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?’ The Church stands in no need of half-hearted members. There is no question as to what the Church holds. No one can be refused the largest liberty; but no one can rightfully take, within the Church, larger liberty than her articles define. If any wants more than that, let him go out and take it.”

The bishop had not agreed with the view of Leo’s duty held by the less logical but more loving rector. This was what she could have wished. Yet the words sounded hard and harsh to the affectionate, burdened heart—burdened in spite of tranquillity; but she fought back the sense of cold loneliness, and of having been ejected while she was going, which these somewhat spirited utterances induced, and acknowledged herself wholly unreasonable to be hurt at hearing another express exactly her own sentiments.

Mr. Thayer came to her after church, where she was waiting. There was only a moment to spare. He was extremely thoughtful and delicate in his way of communicating the message which she had already heard.

“The bishop thinks that *I* was wrong,” he said; “so I shall not oppose you any more. I will see you hereafter.”

The bishop was waiting,—the rector was in haste. Leo’s lips quivered.

“Don’t cry,” he said gently. “If you are really trying to do right, remember that God will hold you—beneath are the everlasting arms; and don’t forget God. He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”

“No, I won’t forget,” said Leo tremblingly; and she

was alone in the church, save for the sexton, who was walking about at a distance, and the organist, who was still playing.

She was free at last; but her position with reference to Roland was not what she had meant it to be. She had thought to tell him the whole history, at least before the bishop's decision came. Alas! Alas! How she had wronged Roland!

She was sick and faint. The houses in the street, as she went out, looked unnatural, unreal, like the sunlight on that day, so many years back, when she flew through the yellow street at home, to bring the doctor to her father.

Well, she could only not spare herself in confessing, and pleading for Roland's pardon; but would he forgive her — would he forgive her?

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE CONFESSION.

At home darker darkness closed in upon Leo. Her fault appeared blacker, the likelihood of its being excused, less. She walked about the house, nervously clasping and unclasping her hands, sometimes lifting them as though she sought fortitude to right to her uttermost, now at last, the injury she had done to her most precious earthly friend.

She was in disturbed haste to have him come — to pour out her long-repressed secret. Her face flamed, her eyes shone. She was looking well this afternoon — better than she had at morning in the Church of the Intercessor. Her prolonged resistance, then, — for the sake of love, of name, of friends, of advantage, — to rational suggestions, and the final desperate wrench by which, for bare truthness' sake, despising all else, she had freed herself, and this crisis, now so near, which she had seen threatening from afar, — these things had not laid so thievish a hand upon her strength as Mr. Thayer had feared. Assuredly it is the sound blood of youth that dyes her cheeks, the vigor of health that sustains her resolution as she urges herself on to this bitterest act of the ordeal.

Seth said anxiously to his mother, "I don't like to see Leo so flushed and trembling. She's been having too much worriment — she's overwrought"; for, though their attitude toward her change does not concern us now,

they all knew that Mr. Stuart must be made acquainted to-day with her altered mind.

Mrs. Dayne took no notice.

Roland came at last — the same dreary cloud upon him that had not lifted for so long. How it touched Leo, who thought herself at least its chief cause,—that gloom of his, that dutifulness! No suspicion of any rival had pierced her perfect trust in him.

To have confronted her with proof that he had been false and fickle even in his thought, that he had been reveling in another woman's honeyed smiles till wholesome, healthful love was insipid and irksome (though even now he thought he meant — so do we deceive ourselves — to keep in the track of honor and his promise), would have been to stun her with surprise; for they had both been too busy of late — she with upbraiding herself, and he with — what? — to divine accurately, as of old, each other's state.

Roland was even more taciturn to-day than usual. It was impossible to thaw him into geniality. Leo, who yearned toward him as only one can yearn who yearns penitently, found, as she had found so many times before, every loving attention, every fond action, powerless to break his unhappy restraint.

He received all, responded to all, as a matter of course; but the same something was missing — something very real, something very vital. It was of no use to speak to him about this lack. She had done that before, and he never would admit that there was such a lack, but insisted that she was imaginative; and besides, since she thought she knew, herself, the principal reason for it,—that her concealment was somehow making it,—she must not appear to be murmuring at him!

It was evident that there was no easy way of introducing the great subject. It must be approached directly.

Leo scarcely knew what she was doing. Her pulse beat high, and her voice shook in defiance of all her efforts to control it, as she said, very specially,—

“Roland, I want to speak with you—about something in particular—something very important.”

As once before in that room, she saw a wonder in Roland’s face. The blood blazed up into it, then flickered slowly down again, leaving only ashes of blood.

“Oh, no!” he said, uneasily and petulantly. Then, with an attempt at humor, “Don’t say anything important to me, I beg. I’m not equal to considering it. My mind is enfeebled for the day. I was just going to propose singing something”; and, accused by conscience, and fearing to hear this important thing which she had to say, though, on the other hand, he was now, through Bertha, just ready to flame into mad distrust of Leo on the least provocation, he began singing a hymn familiar to her, as though expecting her to join him :

“‘Lift up your heads, eternal gates !  
Unfold, to entertain  
The King of glory. See ! He comes  
With his celestial train.

“‘Who is this King of glory ? Who ?  
The Lord, for strength renowned,  
In battle mighty, o’er his foes  
Eternal Victor crowned !

“‘Lift up your heads, eternal gates !  
Unfold, to entertain  
The King of glory. See ! He comes  
With all his shining train.

“‘Who is this King of glory ? Who ?  
The Lord of hosts renowned !  
Of glory he alone is King,  
Who is with glory crowned !’”

Roland paused. Leo's face was white as death now. How could she ever tell him that she did not believe this great conqueror he sung was God? How would he ever understand her after that? How would he ever listen to any explanation after that? How credit that there was any extenuation or any good? The darkness was deepening yet more.

Roland, his recent fear and consequent annoyance somewhat removed, but disposed still to fill the time, began another hymn, now, however, singing more tenderly and sweetly, assisting his memory as to the words by Leo's prayer-book, which, for the purpose, he had picked up from the table and opened at the back.

“Behold the Savior of mankind  
Nailed to the shameful tree;  
How vast the love that him inclined  
To bleed and die for me!

“Hark, how he groans! — while nature shakes,  
And earth's strong pillars bend!  
The Temple's veil in sunder breaks,  
The solid marbles rend.

“’Tis done! The precious ransom's paid.  
“Receive my soul!” he cries.  
See where he bows his sacred head!  
He bows his head and dies!

“But soon he'll break death's envious chain,  
And in full glory shine.  
O Lamb of God! Was ever pain,  
Was ever love, like thine!”

Leo did not wait for any more. To be sure, she seemed tied down — fixed in the rigid position she had taken during this last singing, watching Roland's rapt countenance, as, forgetful of all save what he sang, he poured out his beautiful voice in praise of his Savior and Monarch.



Bursting away from her chair and coming hastily before her lover, and sinking down with her hands locked on his knees, she cried —

“Oh, Roland! I’ve done so wrong—I haven’t told you! I don’t know whether you can ever—as long as you live—forgive me for not telling sooner!”

Greatly surprised, and not a little relieved, to hear her arraign herself and not him, Roland made no further objection to listening. Was it possible that he would not be very sorry to hear something that would condemn her? At any rate, he even tried to comfort her, seeing how agitated she was; and, having pined so long for just one such spontaneous caress, she experienced a sudden lightening—a hope that he was indeed going now to be as he used to be. For thanks, she kissed him eagerly, but said he must wait first and see—wait and see.

Then she began at the beginning, and, in a thick voice, with many sighs, told how she had been assailed, now so long ago, by doubts as to the reasonableness of her religious faith, how she had thought that those doubts were wicked, and how she had suppressed them; how, when they grew more obstinate, she had spoken to Mr. Thayer, and how he had been sure that they would go away, and that she ought not to trouble anybody with them; how the time had gone on, and she had fought them, and looked for their entire removal, until at last they began to be irrepressible and she to perceive that she was in danger of being wholly overpowered, of being no longer—in theory—a Christian.

She paused half-way in her story, before going on to its fatal conclusion; for as she had proceeded, her strength had been dying within her. She knew that Roland’s sympathies were closing her out; but she was not prepared for what her last words brought.

To be sure, they were to him a partial confirmation of

his sister's wily intimations that Leo was loving him less; but with his other emotions, who shall say — ah, the intricate human heart! — how much of joy mingled — joy that he would possibly have an excuse now for going where his deranged fancy led? And, at any rate, this confession of hers was justification for his conduct during about the same period, it was salve to his paining conscience, it was support to his threatened self-regard; and he made the most of it. If Leo had had nothing to confess, Roland would have needed to confess. Now he had a right to be at least severe.

Gripping her hands like a vise and flinging them away, he rose up, took his belongings, and without a word walked out of the house, repulsing her wild efforts to detain him with that kind of wide-eyed, intense gaze more terrifying than any words.

Roland would not speak. What would he do?

Leo might have spared herself the pain of anticipating how infuriated he would be when he was told that she had virtually left the Church before consulting him. He had not even stayed to hear more than that she had once questioned her creed without confiding in him. He did not even know in what points she had questioned it, nor whether she was now cured or was incurable.

Seth came to his sister where she sat overwhelmed and stupefied. He tried to console her. "Such a mood," said he, "as Mr. Stuart was in when he went out can't last long. By to-morrow he'll feel differently."

But it was not the same Leo whom he had always known that Seth was talking to now. Her life seemed to have gone out of her. His words, to which she attended apathetically, called out no response. His heart ached for her, but what could he do?

He stooped and kissed her. It was a good deal for him. It meant more than the thousand endearments of a more demonstrative man.

Bursting into tears, she exclaimed, "Oh, Seth, you're all the world to me now! Roland will never come back! I'm so tired!"

And Seth took her in his arms. If she was losing one kind of love, the sweetest, indeed, of earth, and the one that no other can think to replace, she was finding another—a manly brother's.

"Well, I will be all the world to you, as near as I can come to it," said honest Seth. "I don't expect to be all the world to anybody else, sis,—I've given that up; and I'd like to be something to somebody. But I don't want you to think you ain't going to be all the world to some one besides me. It ain't in nature for you to be satisfied with me; and I mustn't want it. No, and I don't want it, either. Though I have thought, when things have been pretty hard to bear, here at home and in this infernal hole that we've settled in, that if you and I could keep house together, away from here,—you be my housekeeper, you know, and — But it won't do. I only say the thought's crossed my mind. But something better'n that's going to happen to you, and I've got to lose my sister. I'm glad of it—for her sake; for it ain't in nature—there's no use in my thinking it—for you to be satisfied with me."

"I love you—dearly," said Leo tearfully; "but—I want Roland. I can't live without him."

"Of course you can't—that's what I say. I'm a man, and I can stand it—being lonesome; but," fondly, "I want to lose you, and I shall. Mr. Stuart won't let me have you."

No one came to disturb the brother and sister. Mrs. Dayne and Luke had heard Mr. Stuart's violent exit, but they both knew that Seth was the proper one to go to Leo. It was getting to be recognized that these two comprehended each other better than any other two in the house.

Seth did not continue to urge his first view, for he began to remember that it was uncertain whether Mr. Stuart's wrath would subside so soon; but he besought Leo to be composed and await what the morrow would bring forth. He had more years over his head than she, and had learned not to count too surely on anything, nor to run forward on the road to meet either joy or sorrow; but she had not settled down to his staid gait, and strained forward intensely into the future.

For such there is no rest save in unrest. They have not the faculty of closing their eyes to unhappy probabilities and taking their ease until they know that the evil is upon them. They must needs find their repose in paces to and fro, their peace in apprehending the worst.

So it was with a sense of almost complete misery that Leo looked round on her desolate room, after she went to it late that night. She did not go to bed — she would not have slept. Excitement kept her wide awake. The dim lamp threw an unearthly gleam over the familiar objects. In the midnight stillness small sounds were magnified. How strange, how awful a thing was life! How easy, if Roland were lost to her, to give it up! How weary an outlook to contend any longer against hopeless odds! How pleasant to lie down in the cool grave,—great Nature's unequaled rest,—out of hearing of the babblings and the censure, beyond the misconceptions and the scorn!

Leo was tired — so tired! Her courage was flagging, and the things she had so vehemently desired to attain to — usefulness and acknowledged respectability — all looked now so far away, so inaccessible, that to surrender, to leave the field, to abandon all, appeared, for the first time, not an impossibility, not an inadmissible thought; that is, if Roland should not "hold" her: but then he might. There was the chance. Oh, how she wished she

could see him now, this minute! If only she could tell him that she was not changed in anything but doctrinal opinions; that she wanted, just as much as ever, to be good — grand; that she loved him just as she did before, and believed, just the same, in right; that she would try just as hard to be true and helpful!

Her thoughts burned within her, and she started up as though she would go out and find him, whether he were in heaven or earth, and speak to him, cling to him, implore him to give heed. But it must not be. It was the dead of night. It would be scandalous. She could write, though,—it was a happy inspiration; and she did.

If Roland's eye ever perused those lines, he would know all that she would have told him if he had been at hand — yes, and more; for now no cold presence checked her passionate words, no perception that they were wasted obtruded itself upon her.

Rather, as she went on, explaining all her course and showing the reasons why she had taken it, and begging to be forgiven for her dumbness, wherein she humbly confessed herself condemned, she began to be encouraged, and to believe that when Roland was calm he could not think her quite unpardonable; and certainly, at the very least, would come again to talk with her and learn more fully of her errors. He would certainly do that, if only for his religion's sake, not his love's.

And very possibly Roland, if he had been left entirely to himself for the next few days, would finally have done this; but upon reaching home after leaving Leo, he — half because he wanted to hear her sentenced and himself advised to a certain course, and half because of sheer recklessness and abandon — told Bertha all. This was the sister's crowning opportunity; and it is amazing how easy it is to blind a man who half desires to be blinded.

What Miss Stuart had done before she had been obliged

to do darkly: now Roland himself had opened the way for her to work more ably, in the light. She saw fit, at this juncture, to be horrified at one thing only—that Leo should have no more confidence in Roland, that Leo should not love Roland at all. This was the vein in which Miss Stuart had worked from first to last; but a change—of one kind—had occurred in her feelings. We may speak wrongfully of another till we come to have a kind of superficial belief that what we charge is true. This was Miss Stuart's case.

"I," she said, "have been feeling for a good while that Leo did not love you as she ought; but I have not dared to say plainly what I felt—you would have accused me of being prejudiced and meddling. Perhaps you will now; but anybody would say what I do—that this concealment is proof positive that she hasn't a particle of affection for you. And if she can carry on such a piece of deception before marriage, what will she not do after it?"

Miss Stuart went on, wounding her brother's pride, stinging him to the quick, tantalizing him. Then she repeated many of those confiding utterances of Leo, now robbed of their original meaning, which she had long ago stored up with a kind of presentiment that they might be useful to her later.

"Why didn't you tell me these things when they occurred?" asked Roland severely. "This is a fine time of day to be bringing them forward!"

He felt that in cross-examining Bertha he was somehow doing his whole duty to Leo.

"That's all I might have expected!" exclaimed the sister. "Doesn't your way of answering me answer you? If I had undertaken to tell you before you saw a little for yourself; what should I have got?"

Roland did not care to consider this question.

"Besides, I didn't think so much about these things at

first as I have since. Now, Roland, I shall say one thing more, and then I'm done. After that, you can do as you please. Only don't ask me anything — I won't speak on this subject again. What I want to say is — Leo has had encouragement to love you, and yet hasn't done so: there is another who has not had that encouragement, and yet has loved you constantly."

Bertha walked out of the room and shut the door.

Then, more than anything because he sought momentary relief from his restlessness, weariness, uncertainty, chagrin, Roland went out of the house. Of their own accord his feet seemed to take him in the direction of Miss Fessenden's. They had taken him there so often of late! He scarcely realized that he was on the steps till he had rung. Well, he would see her — only see her — and compose himself.

Alas! he came away in a degree involved. What, then, was he to do?

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### TWO LETTERS.

WHEN Leo's letter was finished, she felt better. Seth had hinted that he himself might to-morrow take steps to see Mr. Stuart; but she feared any mediator, even him, between herself and Roland. She trusted more to his and her natural comprehension of each other than to the best-meant arbitration.

Besides, she shrank from having him brought back through any means but his own unassisted inclination — through any means but their mutual love. She dreaded to appear forward, or disposed to use force, or distrustful of the power of that mutual love, or as assuming that he needed to be approached diplomatically through an ambassador; but she had not said so much to Seth, meaning to find, before morning, some mild way of refusing his offices. Now she could tell him of her letter, and ask him to wait.

It was three o'clock. She crept to bed, in the chilly morning, for two or three hours; for she must be at the shop in season — there was even more work than usual to be done this week.

She was so tired after she was in bed that she almost wished she could lie there forever, never have to think about getting up, never have to sew any more, just give over everything and rest. "Only," she whispered, "I wouldn't be too tired to love Roland. If I were dead, I shouldn't be dead enough not to love him"; and at



last fell asleep saying apprehensively, "Oh, my Roland! What should I do without you!"

When she got up she looked so ill that Seth, after promising to do nothing till her letter could be answered, wanted to go and inform Mr. Chick that she was not able to work; but she would not consent to that, Mr. Chick was so "driven."

All day she stood in her place, listening feverishly to every step coming up over the stairs, and growing pale whenever the door-latch clicked. Mr. Chick had no cause to complain that his forewoman was not at her best on this first day of a hard week. She surpassed herself. She worked with something like frenzy. She was not tired now. She was strong.

She watched the clock. Roland would receive her letter in the forenoon; for she sent it to the city. At two he would be back again. He would be passing Mr. Chick's door. Would he come up? Leo thought he would, though generally he went home and came at six — if he could; but this was not like other times. He would know how dreadful it was to her not to hear anything, not to know if he could forgive her, and so he would come and tell her — something; but then he might not, he might put it off till six.

Thus she fortified herself against despair in case he should not appear at the earliest moment. That was well. Two o'clock came; five, ten, fifteen minutes after. Still he might come. The train might have been late, he might have been detained on the street. Half-past two. He might have missed his usual train and be coming on the next. Too late for that now. Perhaps he thought it not best to come in busy hours when he had so much to say.

Leo could hardly wait to get downstairs that night. She stared about almost wildly when she did not discover Roland in his accustomed place. She could not believe

he was not there. It was too early. He was hiding. He was peeping at her now from some shelter, to see what she would do.

If so, he was in no haste to leave his retreat.

Leo took her way toward home, but she was not satisfied. It must be that he was late — that he was coming and would find her gone. She turned back, meeting Miss Pratt, who, though cordially invited in the first place to go with Miss Dayne and Mr. Stuart, had chosen not to be an intruder in lovers' company, and so managed to start a little later than Leo, and excused it by declaring, as she could with veracity, that she was not as spry as she used to be, and liked to take her own time in walking.

The spinster did not perceive Leo, who, returning to the lighted doorway, and looking all about, and up and down and across the street, was obliged to admit that Roland was not there now. Could he have been and gone in her short absence? But would he not, in that case, have followed?

Yet there might be a thousand things to account for his not coming. He might have been under the necessity of getting some letter of consequence ready for the post. He often was, of late. She did not know whether his correspondence related to that place in the distant city or not — though she thought of it; but if he remained away during the evening, none of her conjectures would explain it.

Seth knew, without asking, that she had heard nothing, so he kept silence; and the others had not spoken to her even of the result of her avowal to Mr. Stuart, perceiving instinctively, when they saw her, that she was in the teeth of a trouble that could bear no words.

Alone Leo waited out the hours of that evening. Seth did not go to her where she sat, without a light, in the little best room. He knew better. So did the rest. The

daughter of the house was keeping a vigil, enduring an anguish, which admitted of no companionship — the vigil at the death-bed of a precious hope, the anguish of seeing surely depart from her, with the swift-stepping moments, the one fit soul whose like the wide earth contained not.

Muteness and hearkening were in the kitchen. The three there tried to catch some sound of Leo — some movement, some footstep, some cry. They knew — even all of them — that there was no possibility that this thing, this separation from Mr. Stuart, could be taken lightly by the girl upstairs. They were not deceived because she said nothing. No one of them failed to recognize that she, who never could be taught how foolish it was to be so extreme in everything, and to let everything sink into her so, was menaced now by an immeasurable sorrow, was stretched now, near to breaking, upon a rack of excruciating pain.

They all anticipated fearfully. Mrs. Dayne did not like to feel as she did. She wished she could shake off the sense of tension that oppressed her. She thought of a great many instances of broken engagements which she had known and heard of. It was not at all an uncommon thing. People generally did not look upon it as a killing matter; no, not even the actors in it. Sometimes, to be sure, it took a hold upon them for a while; but they always got over it, though sometimes they never married. There was Dr. White! For was it not natural that Mrs. Dayne should suspect that some such affair was the secret of his bachelorhood?

Still, all the pleasing examples which she succeeded in calling to mind, of sensible couples who had not been so desperately in love that they could not part with reasonable cheerfulness, did not seem to assist her very potently in throwing off the weight of apprehension about Leo which this time affected them all. So deep had Mrs.

Dayne been in cogitation that when the clock struck she started as though from slumber. Ten! Mr. Stuart certainly would not come.

Leo, too, knew that he would not. Yet hope would not quite die. It whispered that this could not be the end of all that had been between them — her Roland and her. Something very unusual might have happened to hinder him. Yet her heart was exceeding heavy. We try hardest to hope when we have the least ground for hope.

Seth went up now. In the dark the brother and sister found each other — found each other in reality. The dark is a revealer — the dark of adversity, the dark of calamity, the dark of overthrow — a revealer of the false, of the faithful, of the equivocal; and now it was revealing friend to friend, in this unpretentious home, as no light could do.

Seth's was an arm to lean upon now. His vigilant love encamped round about his sister, in this the time of her downfall, like a protecting host; while to those whom he considered her enemies it would have made him a besieging army, only that he submitted to her restraint, though not exactly sympathizing with her tenacious scruples about having him wait upon Mr. Stuart.

The next day passed for Leo as the first — with the same anxious watchfulness, the same painful listening, the same disappointment at the same hours; but that afternoon Jack Follansbee handed Seth a letter for her. The mail of the employees of the New England Machine, and of their families, all came to the counting-room, and it was Jack's duty to deliver it to the proper parties. When he came to that letter, in indifferently sorting the pile, he stopped short. It was a suspicious-looking letter. He laid it before him, and pondered. What did it mean? It was post-marked "Brackton," and he was sure it was

from Mr. Stuart. It was a heavy letter, too, with double postage. What occasion that Mr. Stuart should write to Leo at all? One would think he took abundant opportunities to talk!

Jack scented mischief. Or could it be possible that Leo had told Mr. Stuart anything that would go against herself—anything about her views, for instance—to make him do this? That was rather more than the politic Mr. Follansbee could believe, even of her. He studied the letter curiously. Then he turned it over and studied the back; but it was impervious to scrutiny, it revealed no secret. It was with reluctance and a singular air that he passed it over; but Seth was thinking too much of the letter to notice him.

If Jack was reluctant to pass it to Seth, how much more so was Seth to pass it to Leo! Nothing agreeable to her was to be expected from so uncommon a proceeding on Mr. Stuart's part. It seemed, too, that the hurting words, if there were any, were many. Seth knew not how to spare his sister. He could only bear the letter, with its unknown contents, and leave it to do what it would.

As usual, he was at home before her. He was glad. It afforded him a little time to consider how he should give the letter. Mrs. Dayne and Luke both examined the ominous-looking missive, and they all agreed that it must hold a blow for Leo. At that instant she was heard coming in, and Seth did—not any of the things he had thought of doing, but, seizing a light, went to meet her, and, putting it and the letter into her hands, came back to the others, and all so quickly that he could scarcely believe it was done.

"I think somebody'd better be with her," said Mrs. Dayne. She was remarkably alive, of late, to some of Leo's experiences.

"No," said Seth, "she must be alone. She won't want anybody."

"She might faint. Mr. Stuart must be awful when he's in a storm. He frightens me when he ain't."

"She won't faint," said Seth contemptuously. "She ain't that kind. I wish it wouldn't be anything worse."

"Well," sighing, "it never was my way to faint."

Seth looked up at his mother piercingly.

A deathly weakness spread over Leo as she took the letter. She went mechanically into the best room, and set the lamp on the table. Then, with a kind of frantic eagerness to know the worst, she tore the envelope off.

Leo stayed in the best room a long while. Even Seth was alarmed, and went up. Her crossed arms were spread out on the bare table, and her prone head lay on them. From one listless hand, which hung over the edge, had dropped Roland's stinging letter. Her own to him lay on the table—he had read and returned it, "even," he wrote, "as I have read and returned your so-called love."

She did not move when Seth crept silently inside the door and stood gazing down at her. She looked as though she were felled, never more to rise. The mortal weariness of ended hope had flung her down in the pathetic image of sudden and unnatural death. Of course she was not dead, nor even unconscious; but the sight of his sister helpless in distress maddened Seth.

"I have something to do with this," he said savagely, under his breath; and asking no consent, he advanced, lifted the letter from the floor and read it—a very "improbable" letter to come from a scholarly gentleman, a letter written while Roland was so much under Bertha's distracting influence that it might almost be said to have proceeded from her rather than from him.

Not many words, but they were to the point. Roland

Stuart had ever been a master of expression, and when he penned those few scorching sentences he forgot incredibly, as in moments of passion he could forget, his sense of justice, mercy, courtesy.

"The brute!" Seth cried fiercely.

Leo raised herself up, like a corpse that had heard the trump of resurrection.

"Don't," she said; and the low, long, sad syllable, with a quaver of persuasion in it, would have arrested Seth's ordinary anger; but now he swept chokingly on:

"I'll teach him not to use such language to my sister!" and, as though he mistook the letter for the writer, he wrenched the folded paper in two and threw it on the floor, and then, repenting him of treatment so moderate, picked up the pieces, and, in a transport, tore them in fine bits and dashed the handful of shreds furiously down again.

"My Roland — my Roland," repeated Leo confusedly, not minding what she said, remembering only the indignity to him. Then she began to collect the scattered bits, still saying the same thing.

"Don't call him your Roland!" burst out Seth. "He isn't yours! He's the devil's! He's no more fit for you than an imp o' darkness is fit for heaven. If I should touch him my hand would sink into him, he's so rotten."

"Don't," said Leo; and this time Seth did stop. There was a note of distress and a note of authority, now, in the word which he could not disregard.

"I — love — him," continued Leo, in a lifeless monotone that might have come out of her without the exercise of vocal organs, "and I can't hear him spoken against. He thinks he's doing right."

Seth Dayne, only a common-sense and practical man, scrutinized Leo as though he inquired if she could be sincere. Not aware that she was thus interrogated,

scarcely that any one was with her, she sat exhaustedly down again, as though she would never rise, as though she contemplated no future, as though she had done the last act she need ever do; and, laying the gathered scraps on the table, sunk her head upon them, repeating, "He thinks he's doing right."

Seth's answer was interrupted on his lips. Some one came in from out of doors, some one used to coming, some one expected to make himself familiar, some one who walked directly into the best room — the feet that were to sound through all of Leo's life, the feet that had had how much to do, if one could calculate aright every factor of influence, with stamping her down to her present position.

Jack had come so quickly that there was no time, if there had been any desire, to put on disguises; therefore he saw about what had occurred.

For a moment nobody spoke. Leo was the first to do so. With no attempt at cheerfulness, no attempt to put a deceptive face on the matter, she held out her hand, saying simply —

"Good evening, Jack."

Jack shook her hand, but could not soon enough think of anything to say.

"Come," said Seth; and with careful quiet, like those who leave the dead to their repose, the two young men went out of the room.

Jack had not meant to pry, but he could not be easy that evening for thinking of the letter. He did not want Leo to suffer — no. He was not sure that there was any trouble. Still, there might be hope for him now; but after he had seen her he did not think of that — not then. He knew that her heart called not for him, so ready to respond, but only for Roland Stuart, who had forsaken her.



Hope that has its root in love dies hard. Leo believed in Roland — believed that he was essentially noble. It could not then be otherwise than that, crushed as she was at first, hope should, even after all, revive a little when she thought how suddenly this had come to him, and that he had not yet had time to get his bearings. Surely, when he had revolved it longer his conscience would not allow him to do less than understand her fully, as now he did not.

Crawling to her work, with an iron resolve, that was grounded somewhere in her, not to give over, and straining every nerve to keep up to the old mark at the shop, it happened that after a few days the inky cloud on her mind began to lift a little. Her heavy countenance was somewhat lightened. She could bear better the ordinary sights and sounds of the workroom. At first they were nauseating, and she wanted only to get away, away, into stillness — some far and deep and eternal stillness.

Now, instead of going by herself as soon as she came home, and, when they asked her what they could do for her, saying, "Nothing, I need only quiet," she could sit up a little while and cheer them all with the thought that she was improving. Only if they talked much, she could not stay. Why? Because she was "getting tired"; and sometimes Seth would go upstairs with her, and put his arm round her as a support, she seemed so tottering; and she could smile at this now, and assure him — "I'm not sick, only — Roland; his being gone makes all my strength gone, too." But Seth did not smile, and the others did not.

It was very touching to them to see her so broken — her, who had always been (they saw it clearer now that her ministries were quenched) the brightening of the house; and it filled their eyes to hear her speak as she did:

"I'm afraid I haven't brought any of you, that are so good to me now, much happiness. I think of it a great deal. I might have been more thoughtful for you all, in little things, if I'd always been on the lookout"; and when Seth was alone with her she would ask him to sit near, and would cling to his hand and say, "I need you very much! I thank you for your love. Everybody's kind to me since I'm so lost without my Roland."

And Seth dare not let escape him anything against the man whom she so tenderly called hers. She would not allow him to go to Mr. Stuart, either to reprove or gain over. No return of his that was not entirely voluntary would be any real return. She remembered this even in her most desolate, most destitute hours. She would have no lover who was not hers because he wished to be. Better the loneliness of separation than the loneliness of constrained union. She desired no friend whom she must clutch to hold. She could sit in Love's open house and wait for its master's glad returning, rather than retain that master a prisoner whom to loose might be to lose.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE SHOP.

TIME crept slowly forward, and Leo's trembling trust that Roland would come again strengthened as her overturned thoughts adjusted themselves; for, aside from his own conscience, would not Mr. Thayer see him, and tell him of his share in it all? This would effect a great deal; and she loved Roland so! She thought he must know it. She was certain that the messages of affection to him which she was always framing were somehow reaching him. So the gentle heart, itself too fond to expect relentless harshness in him, tried to comfort itself by giving double love now that it was receiving none.

Mr. Chick had not yet been informed of his forewoman's change of faith. She would have told him, but that was out of the question before Roland knew; and as, even now, Roland knew but little, and she believed he would come to ascertain more, she could not speak openly with others of things which she still felt he should be the first to hear.

It was, however, becoming very painful to her to continue thus unavowed. Though the right of Mr. Chick to receive notice of her adoption of other views would not be apparent to some, Leo's scrupulosity required her to lay the whole matter before him as early as possible, and caused her to regard herself as somehow making coats under false pretences until she could do so. It seemed very strange to be lingering in this silence for Roland—to be situated just so as to be unable to move either way.

Oh, if she had never yielded to Mr. Thayer's persuasions! Then she would not have been caught in these toils!

She was still very tired. All of life looked singular and out of joint. She wondered how it would end,—this waiting,—and what they were doing about her at the church. She little dreamed how soon, and in what manner, her waiting for Roland would be brought to a close, however long she might have to wait to learn of any action on the part of the church.

It was the tenth day—for she kept count of them—since Roland's letter came. The habitual mid-day quiet was in the shop. Leo, who made the tea now that Mrs. Chick was not there, was "resting," which she preferred to eating.

Of course her indisposition had been observed and much commented upon; but this morning they had said she was looking better. Mr. Chick (with a pencil behind his ear) was taking his dinner in the shop to-day, to save time. Miss Pratt, who subscribed for one of the weekly local papers, and was as eager to get it as an opium-eater his poison, had run out to the postoffice as soon as work stopped, in order to combine bodily and mental enjoyments in the noon-hour, and was at present adding to the tea-aroma the damp press-odors of the open sheet.

"Good heavens!"

The exclamation came from Miss Pratt, and was equal to an oath from a less careful person. She would not have spoken if she had thought in time; but now she could not turn away curiosity. Hers had been a too spontaneous note of amazement and consternation. Everybody came about her—Leo last, from her "resting" in the corner; slowly, numbly; knowing intuitively that this was something of terrible concern to her. She saw a row of astounded faces swimming round Miss Pratt. They made room for her, and she mechanically read what they showed her.

"The marriage of Mr. Roland Stuart to Miss Ella Fessenden took place yesterday at the bride's home. Mr. and Mrs. Stuart leave the State immediately, to enable Mr. Stuart to enter upon the duties of his new position in —— College. Mr. Stuart is a rising young man with brilliant prospects, and the best wishes of countless friends accompany the happy pair on their journey."

All eyes were fixed on Leo with a kind of questioning incredulity. They seemed to demand that she should deny the report—should say that it could not be correct. The news came very near to the thunderstruck group in the tailor's shop, who had so often and so recently seen Mr. Stuart with Leo. She did not speak, and it began to dawn on the little company that she had cause to believe there was no mistake.

"Can it be true!" said Mr. Chick.

"Yes," Leo answered, like one who speaks in sleep. "It—must—be—true. I want to say—to everybody—that Mr. Stuart—has a reason. I have turned—an infidel—and that is why. I want you—to tell everybody."

It was the unniggardly impulse, the necessity, of the moment not to spare, to give to her convictions the hardest name applied to such convictions—a name whose primary meaning is abused in such a use of it; but as yet—for liberality, like other things, is a growth—she had not pondered this, and in exonerating Mr. Stuart she thought of only one thing—of what was due from her to him. When she had paid this debt, good measure, pressed down and running over, she cared not to justify herself. Nothing could do her any good now—unless to rest forever and ever.

For a long time after that she did rest. She could not go to the shop.

"I am not ill," she said, "only weak and unstrung."

But clinging, black despair, like a suffocating pall, held her down. The nightmare of grief was upon her.

"Oh, my Roland — mine!" was her incessant smothered cry.

Then came the vision of him giving his devotion to his bride, and of his bride bestowing on him the blessings of love and home-life, till it flashed as a wild joy on the racked dreamer, There is a way to die! Her father had found a way.

Leo's strength was broken. Life looked hard and rough, and death sweet and restful, and she was haunted by the thought of that father, and of how he had found it best to die — for there was one at last, after all these years, to understand him fully, to divine aright the unrevealed speculation and conclusion, to interpret aright the remembered look and phrase.

So the tolling days crept slowly by, with her soul wandering always wearily back and forth through the different rooms of hell.

When one has reached the acme of suffering, relief comes. When one cannot find relief, it is because that acme has not been reached. So, for Leo, the horror of great darkness — the positive misery — was succeeded by quiescence — a dull listlessness.

She had been the one to inform them at home of Roland's marriage. Seth burst out in execrations of Mr. Stuart's meanness and falseness, which he thought were proven by this action. If he had been surprised that his sister stood by her lover before, he was dumbfounded now. How any woman of common sense should fail to see that Roland Stuart was a scamp and a rascal, who no doubt had been all along paying his addresses to Miss Fessenden and was only glad of some excuse for jilting Leo, was what Seth did not know.

Even he, her brother, who comprehended her better than the mother who bore her, was ready to think that she spoke in Roland's defence more on account of some romantic notions respecting eternal fidelity than because she still retained any genuine love or esteem for this exposed man; but Seth was mistaken, and he learned it in the course of the slow weeks.

Although not entirely and unreasonably defending Roland, Leo could but hear in her inmost consciousness an undertone of apology for him, such as sometimes makes itself audible for another even when we are enraged against him.

"You," she said to them all, "cannot know about Roland as I do—how good he is, and yet how easily influenced" (she more than suspected Bertha now), "how hasty and how repentant; and you don't realize how great my own offence was in not speaking sooner. If he has injured me, I forgive him with all readiness; and I hope the wrong I did him isn't so deep that he can't sometime forgive me."

Seth ventured to remind her—"He didn't even wait to hear your story."

"Well, a good many causes must have been at work to make him do what he did. I can see, better than you can, how it must have been. No one of us is quite blameless, and it isn't necessary for one to be so in order to be inestimable to another."

And Seth, not much acquainted with love, holding the ordinary, humdrum ideas of that passion, began to have a strengthening perception that between Roland Stuart and his sister there must be—in spite of mistake and fault, in spite of wrong and sin, in spite of disruption and disaster—a bond of fitness that no accident could truly sever, a groundwork of union that no catastrophe could truly destroy. The lonely man, growing now into con-

firmed bachelorhood, felt his own loneliness more keenly as he saw more closely into the spirit of real marriage. Even Leo was less lonely than he, he thought, for she had at least found, if she had lost again, the one on whom her heart could rest, desiring no other.

Meantime, the intelligence of Mr. Stuart's marriage and of Leo Dayne's heresy had spread, and that part of the public cognizant and interested was dwelling upon the affair and arriving at a decision as to the exact merits of the case. It was generally conceded that it would have "looked better" in Mr. Stuart not to transfer his affections so suddenly; but then, on the other hand, it was remembered that he had known Miss Fessenden a sufficient time, that there had once been some hints of an attachment between them, and that there was no knowing what besides heresy he had discovered in Leo, to disgust him and warrant his action.

Conduct so up and down, with so high and independent an air,—so dignified and contemptuous a silence respecting the woman he cast off, and perfect absence of explanation or self-clearing,—seemed to insinuate volumes against her, and to look as if Mr. Stuart knew what he was about. He would not have degraded her thus if she had not richly deserved it in some way—on that you might stake your life; and it was shrewdly guessed that, if the truth were known, he had become satisfied that she was exactly what she had had the name of being. It was lucky he found out before it was too late that all the smoke did not come without fire.

So the neighbors went on, accusing Leo of the gravest misdemeanors glibly enough to charge themselves with thinking those misdemeanors but light things.

Of course there were those who could credit nothing against Leo's character—the few who knew her inti-



mately. There were also those who did not admit that she was any the worse for her apostasy. Miss Pratt was the one most distressed of all at the shop on account of it. Religion was the subject under discussion there every noon now; and it was developed that nobody was destitute of views on the great matter, and that these tailor-esses held opinions as set, and fought over a point as valiantly, and tried as heroically to convince, as if they had been theological graduates. They stirred up so much ill-feeling among themselves that it softened any enmity they may have had towards Leo's change. In the bitterness caused by their disputes they were fain to call one another worse than those who simply held unsanctified opinions.

At length, however, the noon discussers did, to outward appearance, fall into agreement with one of their number, a daughter of perdition, who boldly declared—

“All this talk is tomfoolery. One belief is as good as another, provided a body behaves,—that's my sentiment,—and you'd better be doing something useful, instead of getting into a huff over what nobody knows anything about anyway.”

Here a Second Adventist “girl” looked at this speaker with pensive reproach, and remarked warningly, “We're already living in the toes!”

Even well-disposed Miss Pratt, who had proved argument with the Baptist buttonhole-maker very disturbing to herself and provocative of subsequent incurable chilliness in the buttonhole-maker, was perfectly convinced that the latter, in spite of billows of regeneration and marked fondness for “Nearer, my God, to Thee,” was quite as “touchy” and “hard to get along with,” when you came to know what was really inside of her, as any sort of denier could be.

In view of Leo's remembered pleasantness and the

buttonhole-maker's unpleasantness, an idea had come into good Miss Pratt's head that there was something wrong somewhere — thus putting herself, if she had but known it, into very eminent company indeed. Just where it was wrong and how it was wrong, she could not make out; but it occurred to her for the first time that there might be things in the universe not fully understood and explained beyond cavil by the Methodist Episcopal Church. Worse yet, it occurred to her to inquire how the Methodist Episcopal Church came to know all the things that it did know; but hers was only a vague and fleeting disturbance.

There was one thing that she knew; and upon that she fell back, and religiously determined to count all other knowledge loss "for the excellency" of that, and to read and to hear nothing adverse to it — a course exceedingly favorable to a sure and undivided mind. To doubt that God was made flesh and dwelt among us, and became the propitiation for our sins, was beyond her outermost possibilities.

So this innocent weak soul lifted up through the centuries her beseeching hands, and, in imagination, laid hold of an innocent strong soul, crowning, for her, their hoary summit, and, in imagination, was saved from the unspeakable torments prepared by the Father for such as deny the son.

And now Experience was to take Roland Stuart, and lead him, with no particular tenderness, through her thorny paths. When we will not learn in easy ways, we may have to in hard ones.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE RECTOR.

LEO never knew how the Church of the Intercessor regarded or acted upon her falling away. No word nor sign from it came to her ear or eye. Perhaps it was not necessary for it to notice her withdrawal. Perhaps Mr. Thayer still thought it undesirable that heresy should be brought much to the attention of the unheretical. At all events, the church sailed on apparently unaware, or indifferent, that a passenger had gone overboard.

But where was Mr. Thayer? This question began to be an oppressive one to Leo, shut in at home so long, waiting to get "a little stronger,"—for she still sat languidly in her chair, though trying now to sew as much as she could for Mr. Chick, who missed her sorely, and sent the work, and had been himself to see her, and took occasion to let everybody understand that he pitied her, "sir," very much; but she was obliged to rest often, and still shuddered at a sound, though, as she continued to explain thoughtfully, not because she was ill.

She did not believe that Mr. Thayer despised her—that he was no longer her friend. Then, too, as she slowly sewed and pondered, she could but recall anew how powerful an influence he had exercised upon her and Roland's affairs, and wonder if he never thought of it—wonder that he should not be troubled, should not come and speak of it. She wondered, too, if he married

Roland to Miss Fessenden. She could not think he did without first telling all that justice required.

Nobody said anything to any of the family about the new mortification that had come upon it, and hence none of them learned more than the wedding notice had told them. It was as if Leo, and the remembrance of her, had suddenly departed. This was not because she was held in contempt too profound to admit of her existence being recognized, but because of a certain instinct of delicacy not altogether lacking even in Utopians. In the years which the Daynes had spent there, they had come to be estimated, most of them at least, more correctly. Mrs. Dayne had fewer enemies, and was generally regarded as a rather worthy woman of most uncomfortable temper. Luke and Seth were known to be steady-going fellows, who minded their own business and looked straight before them.

It began to be perceived that the whole trouble in that family was Leo; for there is rather more danger of being contemned on account of being noble — too noble to be understood — than on account of being ignoble. Mrs. Dayne was more to be sympathized with than blamed for being "riled" all the time, they said. Leo was the black sheep, and had been all along. She was showing out now for just what she was; and the public considered itself enlightened and admitted at last to the inside facts respecting the family, and remarked, with certainty, that everything has to come out in the course of time.

Thus the inferior are eternally busy wrongly interpreting their betters, and then congratulating themselves on their infallibility. The ordinary cannot comprehend the extraordinary. The only aid one has in translating a greater life is the insufficient lexicon of his own life. Common men of common experiences cannot be expected to do otherwise than reason commonly and arrive at the common conclusion.

Meantime the worn-out seamstress was shut in from the hubbub of tongues. Of course she knew that there must be hubbub, that she must be the subject of much criticism; but physical lassitude made her able to be simply glad of shelter, able to feel little concern, for the present, in the distant clamor.

She did indeed look forward shrinkingly to the time when she must arise and go out from her temporary haven, and face the curious eyes that would pierce like daggers; for was it nothing to make her ashamed that she was spurned before all the world by her hero, the man who, everybody should know, was her hero still? But now was dreamy languor, little more.

Yet she wondered, too, about Roland—if he were happy. Could she have known how quickly marriage wears to tatters a veil of illusions! And more and more she wondered about Mr. Thayer, and about the girls at the shop. Miss Pratt had thought of coming to see her, but had not been sure that her presence would be agreeable; and when Mr. Chick called, he and Leo had avoided, by common consent, all reference to the forewoman's former friends and their present feeling for her.

But one day there came a rap at the door that startled Leo not a little—for they were still very careful about noise. It was Mr. Thayer's rap, and she knew, as soon as he came into her sight, that she had been right; that he was her friend yet; that his brotherly love had survived the bitterest trial to which it could have been put—her change. There was nothing to mar that love but the apparently inevitable shade which falls upon the safe when contemplating those who persist in being unsafe.

The rector came as a culprit—no pride hindered his penitence. He had been away since the bishop's visit, and, just returning, had heard with amazement all that had transpired. It had been his intention to make a full

explanation to Mr. Stuart of Miss Dayne's concealment, but he had found it inconvenient—impossible, it had appeared to him—to do so before his journey. Now it was too late. The clergyman who had taken his place had performed the ceremony.

Mr. Thayer felt that his own omission must be suffered for by himself and Miss Dayne, perhaps by others,—there was no other way now; though he knew not how much effect what he would have told Mr. Stuart would have had. As for himself, he feared he had neglected the duty that God placed near at hand—the most pressing duty—for a distant and more attractive one. He acknowledged himself humbled, rebuked; but no error thoroughly repented of could fail to bless. It helped us to avoid that error in the future. He hoped he should receive as he ought the lesson this contained.

Verily, nothing could much harm Mr. Thayer. He was encased in optimistic trust.

As to Miss Dayne, the reverend gentleman seemed rather inclined to congratulate her, in the secrecy of his own mind; or, at least, there seemed to be confusion in that mind as to whether that or condolence were proper to the occasion.

Clearly, Mr. Stuart had not raised himself in Mr. Thayer's estimation by his sudden marriage; and very likely the minister indulged, on this occasion, the uncharitable thought that Miss Fessenden had not been fasting and praying as much as it would have been well for her to do before taking so serious a step.

The rector was himself too good to be strictly acute in penetrating those who were different from himself.

He was intimately acquainted with Leo,—more intimately than with Mr. Stuart,—and he had the utmost confidence in her character; and nothing more softens religious prejudice than intimacy of acquaintance that

produces confidence in character. So, when it came to the pinch, character weighed more than faith, even in the scales of the Reverend Mr. Thayer. Hence the very improper confusion in the clerical mind, which caused him almost to felicitate a desperate heretic upon being quit of a faithful believer.

Leo was better, a great deal better, after seeing Mr. Thayer. The meeting aroused her. His was at least a voice from the outside world, and, too, the voice of one ruled by precisely the same aspiration as hers,—the aspiration to be and to do *the best*,—and so the voice of a spiritual kinsman, only making his home in a different part of the same domain, and having the speech and manner of his own region.

After this Leo tried harder to command herself, to shake off her torpor, to be reconciled to, even interested in, life. She must be brave—must be equal to the call, the suffering. She must face the years that were to be hers. She must go through with what was before her. She could not die as her father died—she must earn the right to die by living well. What good had she done in the world, that she should have thought to hasten gladly from it, like a ripe worker? She must be up and doing, as in all the days before. This was the only way to be deserving of anything better than had befallen her. It would not do to allow herself to sink down spent so far from the journey's end. Roland would not have done so, no matter what might have befallen him.

It was not natural that she should think anything had befallen Roland so bad as had befallen her; but perhaps before this time Roland thought otherwise, and had even arrived at the conclusion that all women were not alike.

So Leo set her face resolutely forward again, dragging herself from task to task, resting between them, fighting as best she could the suggestions of despair. How use-

less, how sunless, seemed all things! Life to be begun over again, and that, too, not with a record still unmade, fresh hopes, tolerable prospects, but after outward defeat, and with robbed affections, and destitute of bounding expectations.

No wonder that, in spite of devices for cheating herself into being happy, in spite of beating—beating—beating back the pressing phantoms of darkness, she heard above everything a persistent whisper, “All is lost!” No wonder that she went on in the path before her without joy, and simply because it was all she could do.

It was too soon for the best reconstruction to begin. Her heart seemed like a shriveled branch that could never know again the movements of the sap of Spring. Yet she must go on. She must support herself and help the others; and she must not think to be honored, to be even respected. That was past now. She saw it. She had risked all for principle—and had lost all except principle.

She knew that no number of years of toil, of honesty, could set her right before the world. Her name was blasted—that was all there was about it. She accepted the fact to begin with, thus saving herself the long pain of hoping for better things when there were no better; for in such cases as hers, hope in the world is delusion and unrest, despair is truth and peace.

But not without agonizing can youth relinquish things so dear as she had relinquished—not even for lofty reasons, not even when, as with her, no regret is felt for the choice which has brought sorrow. Bitter, strong tears that cut their way, and secret moans and cries, it wrung from her; but when we lose, for such reasons, all of earth, we lay up invisible treasure the faster. The most magnificent striving that can be done is done when we know that striving will be, externally, in vain.



Leo's desponding was good. It threw her back, at one grand bound, from all dependence for incentive upon the world's judgments and rewards. Henceforth, if she pursued right it would be for naked right's sake.

Mr. Thayer had not alluded to her withdrawal from his church, and she had not inquired how her formal separation had been effected, if at all. It made no difference. She must look forward and not backward.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE METHOD OF "BUSINESS."

AND the first thing to be done by Leo in the way of looking forward seemed to be to resume work. Mr. Chick's calls had been made for the ostensible purpose of ascertaining how she was, and how soon she could come back, for he had been forced to bring Mrs. Chick "down" for at least a little while every day during the forewoman's inconvenient absence; but he had had one other errand besides. Leo's wan, meek face, however, had touched him, and he had gone away each time with that errand still undone.

Mr. Chick had been growing prosperous, very prosperous, all these years. His business was on a firm footing now. He had a great deal more to do than when he first employed Leo at the head of his establishment, and she had bent herself uncomplainingly to added burdens till she was packed to the last straw of her capacity; but it had occurred repeatedly to the tailor that he was paying her a good deal.

To be sure, she was indispensable, and he knew that he would give more rather than part with her; but he did not much doubt that she could now be hired cheaper, while if anybody should happen to criticise him for retaining an irreligious person, he could plead his "pity." As to the sum he was giving her, one could not afford to throw away money in paying more than one was compelled to. He should not be surprised if she would work for some dollars per week less. The difference would

amount to considerable, sir, in the course of a year. Worse yet, it had amounted to considerable in the past.

So Mr. Chick had really come to think that he was losing; but so long as Mr. Stuart's attentions to Miss Dayne continued, it had been impracticable, if not illegitimate, to propose a reduction. During that period Mr. Chick had been so much in dread of the time when he must certainly part with Leo, that, aside from his wholesome awe of Mr. Stuart's protective powers as extended over her, he could not think of mentioning smaller wages. Now, however, the case was different.

Mr. Chick had talked so much of his pity for Leo that he began to regard himself as almost magnanimous in holding her situation open for her, and as neglectful of business in not attending to the reduction now, before she returned; and yet when he got into her presence it was not easy to attend to it. Indeed, at times he almost gave it up.

He recalled that she had done much extra work, in season of "drives," for which she would take nothing, because she did it only "to oblige,"—work that even he must consider extra, because done at home after the day at the shop was over. When he remembered this, he felt almost justified in continuing the same pay. He had not lost so much, after all. It relieved him, in one sense, to think of it in this way. It was disagreeable to have to "cut down" an old employee that had been so faithful, hardly ever taking even a day of absence till after Mr. Stuart insisted upon it in order to show her some of the beauty, treasure, and interest of the metropolis.

What excuse, then, could Mr. Chick make for the "cut-down"? She had been ill and perhaps would not be so strong now. He could say that. But no! That would not do. It would disgrace him to take the misfortune of illness as the cause. Besides, he knew that Leo would

work well, let the consequences to herself be what they might.

He had half a mind not to "bother" any more about it—to let things go on as they were. Yet he continued to think; and he saw so many ways in which he could advantageously expend the extra cash on which he calculated, and saw, in imagination, so many articles that it would buy, and of which he was now depriving himself on account of liking to add just so much—even dollars—every month to his bank deposit, that other considerations grew lighter, and he fell to supposing that not one business man in a hundred would hesitate as he had. It was his softness that was to blame. Hire for as little as you can—that was the motto that obtained in business.

So Mr. Chick gained courage to broach the matter to Leo; but his warm, ruddy face was lit for hours afterward with something more than the light of health—the uncomfortable fire of shame.

When she understood the import of his somewhat blundering sentences she exclaimed sympathetically, "You have met with losses!"

Her eyes were not open yet to see Mr. Chick as simply mean. He had been otherwise, and the gradual change had not shown itself to her. She thought of him as one of the stanch and incorruptible ones, in whom nobody need fear to be disappointed.

"N-o-o," said Mr. Chick,—and it was then that the red wave crept high up in his cheeks,—"no losses."

Then he wanted so much something else to say, some apology for his act, that he mumbled the very thing he had decided it would not be advisable to speak of—that she had been ill and he thought her services would not be so valuable now as formerly.

Leo was cut to the quick. It was not the loss of the money. That could well have been borne if only there

had been need of it, if only there had been some way to refer Mr. Chick's move to something besides just common business sharpness, some way to retain a belief in his early large-heartedness and high-mindedness.

She had co-operated with him more as though she were an equal sharer of the profits than as a hired helper: he had thriven apace, and she had had only her weekly stipend. How many times Mr. Chick had said at home that he really did not know how he could have got on, in view of the twins and Mrs. Chick's consequent retirement, if he had not been lucky enough to have Leo with him! "She's been my making!" he declared.

Besides her inborn ambition to excel, she had had the stimulus of being in hearty friendship with her employer, and of assurance that he was thoroughly satisfied with her. Now, however, there was the distressing possibility that he had not been. She put the question directly to him — it was her way.

"I want you to tell me truly — have you been satisfied with me?"

Mr. Chick was fairly alarmed. He had not thought that she might look at it thus, and he knew that he should lose her if she got that notion. Therefore his answer set her wholly at rest on that score.

"You could not have pleased me better!" he most emphatically declared.

It was plain that he was entirely satisfied with her and her management. No wonder, then, that the prosperous tailor, who had determined to succeed anyway, and who had succeeded, should flush with shame. His embarrassment spoke better for him than composure would. Of course he won his point.

"I don't want more," Leo said, "than you think I am worth. I shouldn't feel at ease if I were receiving more. Are you quite sure you have set the figure low enough?"

Mr. Chick was quite sure.

After he had gone Leo sat pondering. She was undergoing the process of recovery from the rude shock which a loving and enthusiastic nature receives when it is met with cool mercenary calculation. It was many days before the hurt was healed of having Mr. Chick address her in that new, strange, mercantile spirit which so surprised her, and which she wondered at more and more as she thought.

But she was chary of her judgments now. Nothing can more strongly confirm the teaching not to think evil than experiences like hers; and hers were bearing abundant fruit. She believed that often we are censorious only because we are unacquainted. She contemplated men and things from the ground of broader views than formerly. Her sympathy was widened, her charity deepened.

She was learning the great lessons of true liberality — learning to regard all of Life, with its mighty world-actions and its divers classes and customs and fortunes, as well as the character, the discipline, and the fate of the individual, moving sensibly only within his own little orbit though whirled in involvement with the vaster movements of the age and land,—learning to regard in humility these matters, this play of apparent good and evil, as being mystery too profound for glib settlement, mystery beyond the explanation of any neat, spang little philosophy or formula whatever; and her thoughts about Mr. Chick were in accord with these ideas.

She bore in mind that very likely she knew nothing of his true self in this incident. Possibly God and each soul were in the community of keeping between them the secret of that soul's motives. Did those who were so sure they knew all about *her* really know anything? Perhaps Mr. Chick had had some very worthy reasons which he

could not tell; and even if his reasons were unworthy, she knew nothing of what had brought him to the pass of entertaining them, had nothing to do with the great concern of pronouncing sentence upon the hidden man in her neighbor. If that were ever done, it would be done by One sure to judge righteously.

Not that she was certain now about the personality of God, or that there would be a day of judgment such as she had been taught to expect. She simply knew nothing about these and a great many other things, and had the honesty and strength to face and confess the fact; but she was gaining peace without knowing.

"I am the truth," said one; and, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." She had lost her life for truth's sake, and now she was slowly finding a fuller life than ever. The old props were taken away, and, behold! there was no further need of crutches!

She had cried out in fear because she must leave her Father's house, not knowing that the whole wide universe was equally her Father's house. She had wanted to rest where she was, and now she was coming to rest in advancing. She had been afraid of the dark outside the Church, and now that shuddering fear was gone forever; for she had pushed out into the terror and found that it was no terror, because the light was greater than she had known — because it was outside as much as inside. So, in regard to Mr. Chick and his work, she had nothing to do but consider what her own duty was, and perform it; and that, of course, she resolved to do.

Mr. Chick also pondered after his stroke of business with Leo. He was disturbed, annoyed. He cordially wished that he had let well enough alone. He determined to pass the matter by as a joke, if possible, and pay her as much as ever. He could say he was trying her to ascertain if she was content at the present figure; or

something of that sort. That would be making a pleasant suggestion to the effect that he had been thinking of paying her even more; and she would never take advantage of it, either.

One snowy Monday morning found Leo in her old place at the shop. Not that she ought to have been there. The jovial undertaker, who knew her well by sight, and, going in the same direction, came across her on her way, did not think she looked able to walk. He pulled up his horse and said pleasantly, "I'd ask you to get in, if you didn't mind riding with a corpse." The end of a "box" was visible under the vacant part of the seat.

"I don't mind," said Leo, for she perceived that the cheerful undertaker's intention was of the best. "I'm not afraid of—anything."

"Well, you hain't any need to be afraid o' this; and you don't look much different from a corpse yourself, as far's that's concerned."

So she climbed into the covered wagon by the side of the undertaker, who, with his hat drawn down and the thick snow undisturbed in the folds of his clothes, had every aspect of a stuffed image.

It was a dreary day to Leo. To return after bereavement to old scenes, which, because they have not changed, remind you how changed are you, is to be bereft afresh. But first days are hardest days. Let one persist; let one crowd back his tears, and do, working though he work joylessly, striving to make his day's offering as perfect as though the hands that wrought were not momentarily ready to drop for very weariness away from the task forever; let him do hour by hour because it is proper to the hour and he cannot see beyond,—and, thank heaven, cheer does come at last!—cheer that even no prison-wall can stay, no circumstance rebuff, no man hinder.



Leo, perceiving that for this world, its honor, its respect, its emoluments,—for all of life, its hopes, its dreams, its promises,—she was simply ruined, nevertheless toiled on sturdily in the gray winter atmosphere of her present condition. With her new habit of holding her head up and moving on with a steady, determined air, as though she were passing through a resisting medium, she reminded one of a ship beating its way against wave and storm.

Most of the girls at the shop were kind, very kind; and Leo's feelings were tender, very tender. A considerate attention made her eyes wet in an instant. These things were worth much now. She would never have other, nearer, sweeter love than this. She would be thankful for this.

In time, the girls asked her to explain the nature of the change in her belief. She did so, and then withdrew, thenceforward never either obtruding her opinions upon any, nor, on the other hand, shrinking from declaring them to any.

As of old, dwellers along her route noticed how regularly she went back and forth. One would be safe enough, they said, to set one's clock by her.

Now people who meet you every day, and have heard all about you, come to think that they know you very well. It is no check to this remarkable delusion that they have never passed a word with you in their lives. Among those who thus observed Leo, now that she had reappeared, probably some pitied her as an openly demeaned and broken woman, some despised and detested her as a false and wicked one, and none had any just conception of the actual state of the case.

She was even more quiet than formerly. Never had she been forward in pushing her way and making herself known. The troubles that had come upon her so early

had increased her natural tendency to loneliness and introspection. It had not occurred to her at any time to force herself into the company of such as did not seek her, in order to compel them, through acquaintance, to cast away their prejudices. It had only occurred to her to be worthy, not to scheme to be recognized as worthy; and now more than ever she lived apart. Mr. Chick and the girls, her own people, Jack Follansbee,—these were her only associates.

Mr. Thayer came once more—to bid her good-by. He was going to another diocese—one in the South. He had sought the change on account of his wife's health. The optimistic rector, with his unshaken confidence that somehow or other everything was so right that it could not be bettered, wrung Leo's hand, and went away with a bright face to his beloved wife and the smiling South—went away to action, to esteem, to fresh scenes, bidding Leo have faith in God's intimate management of all our affairs; but what wonder if, sometimes, she had no assurance that righteous government triumphed in this world? What wonder if, sometimes, it seemed to her that lies and liars triumphed?—that if there was any justice, it happened, and was not at all the regular thing? Of course she could not say but all this would hereafter be shown to have been the disguised workings of a perfect government; but in that view, what wonder if, sometimes, she questioned why that government should not be perfect for short as well as for long, for here as well as for there?

To Leo Mr. Thayer's going was the severing of the last frail tie that bound her to the Church of the Intercessor and its members. It left her unspeakably sad; for he was her friend. To be sure, his friendship was smaller than that which reached after him more intensely than he would ever know. To be sure, there was something lacking of strength in it, something too much of pastoral generality, to make it wholly satisfying.

He had numberless friends and made no great discrimination between them, drawing upon them only to the extent of his slender needs—the needs of a simply good nature without deep cravings and content with one common flavor of amiability in everybody, and unconscious of, or disregarding, all-important minute differences and delicate special qualities.

His friendship, therefore, stopped far short of perfection, and to one like Leo would often give pain by exhibitions of its meagerness. Yet it was his best. He gave all he had. So he had bidden her an unmoved good-by, as though he were only going home and they would meet again to-morrow,—and was gone.

No, not quite; for he hastened back after proceeding a few steps from the house.

“Oh!” he said, “heré is a little book I brought you. It is for a present—a very small one—if you will accept it. I always keep a copy near me, and turn to it a great deal. I’m very fond of it myself; and I thought you might like it, and be as much blessed by it as I. You will find it very helpful in daily devotions.”

The book was a collection of pious breathings.

How truly kind, thoughtful, excellent, the rector was! Leo choked, and especially when he was gone again and she read what he had written on the fly-leaf:

*To Miss Dayne,  
From her friend, Edward Thayer.*

*“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;*

*“The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;*

*“The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”*

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### A QUESTION OF PRINCIPLE.

WELL, there was nothing for Leo but to press forward hardily on the now more lonely road.

The road was indeed getting rougher. Things were not as they used to be at Mr. Chick's. As to his resolve to pay her as much as ever, before Saturday night came he had recovered from his mortification and was feeling differently. He reflected that it would be mere child's play to continue the same wages after making such an ado to lower them.

Besides, if he did not lower them now, Leo would be sure to conclude that he had done that which even he recognized as worthy to be ashamed of: whereas, there was really nothing out of the way in what he had done. It was simply a legitimate business transaction.

Mr. Chick still prided himself on doing business "legitimately"; but he was learning, he said, that he must have some backbone about him, and not be too sentimental. It did not "pay." In order to live, a man must look out for himself. If a man did not look out for himself, Mr. Chick would like to know who would look out for him; and if a man spent his time in looking out for other folks, who would thank him for it? So when Saturday night came, he retained a few more dollars in his own pocket and put fewer by so many into Leo's.

But this was not the change that troubled her. There were other changes. Mr. Chick's manners to all frequently showed a disagreeable dash of arrogance; but, besides,

was he beginning to call it legitimate to cheat? At any rate, there were a good many odd things happening. Once he had meant to deserve success: now that he had it, was he becoming less particular about the deserving? Though the overworked forewoman tried to think not, she was getting to understand Mr. Chick better. Understanding may divide two more hopelessly than misunderstanding; for misunderstanding may be corrected, but understanding admits of no correction.

Mr. Chick had an abundance of customers now. There was no longer any time to be utilized in making sale goods. The whole establishment was strained to clothe his regular patrons. In fact, it was growing to be impossible to do all that was pouring in to be done.

Mr. Chick had suggested quicker methods—in short, an inferior quality of work; but Leo, not fully perceiving this, and innocently referring, as always before, to the book, had still turned out first-class garments where first-class garments were bargained for. But manage and hurry and worry as she would, there was no keeping abreast of the lengthening list of unfilled orders. What was to be done?

One day Mr. Chick and she were talking it over, as they had before. Mr. Chick repeated—"There's no way but to adopt quicker methods."

Then it came out plainly that he meant there was no way but to slight where slighting would not show. "It makes no difference," he said, "where it's out of sight. It doesn't pay me to put so much work in. A man must look out for himself."

As we know, Mr. Chick considered Leo indispensable to him, only now he desired her to address herself to making poorer clothes as she had formerly done to making good ones. He must have a change—must have a dropping down, "right through," in the style of making.

Then he ventured to imply (though this was a contradiction—and Leo noticed it—of his recent positive and evidently sincere statement that she had pleased him wholly) that her methods had tended to impoverish him. He thought that would be the quickest way of making her ready to “drop down” in the style of making.

In spite of the noticed contradiction, Leo was stricken at Mr. Chick’s faultfinding; but she said, “I don’t think I could slight anything.”

Now Mr. Chick had carefully avoided the use of any such convenient and appropriate term as “slight” in describing the “changes” that he demanded. He had been willing to inconvenience himself with any amount of circumlocution for the sake of not introducing that very word. It touched his pride and his temper that, in spite of this, Leo went straight to the root of the matter and said “slight.” There is much in names, and it is very provoking to have things which we have characterized in terms that do not offend us called by those against which we have a deep-seated prejudice.

“Who said anything about slighting?” cried Mr. Chick, with virtuous indignation and his swelling manner.

“I mean I can’t do any but good work,” said Leo pitifully. “I couldn’t—not even if I had to leave on account of it.”

Here was another thing that Mr. Chick had not wanted Leo to say, nor even to so much as think of. He had thought of it himself, before now, with dread; but it stirred fresh anger in him to have her think of it.

“Leave, then!” he cried unwisely, losing all control of himself. “You’ve insulted me anyway, by speaking of ‘slighting.’ It’ll be you that’ll suffer by leaving. You won’t get another place in a minute, and I can get along somehow; and I take it you can’t afford to be idle long.”

A few years ago, how impossible it would have been for Mr. Chick to speak like this to anybody! But he was blusteringly prosperous now.

The sudden dawning of the likelihood that she must go away from Mr. Chick's set everything in a whirl for Leo. Never before had she thought of this. What should she do, where should she turn? But in crises one drops small considerations. So now Leo remembered only the central fact that, let come what might, it was better not to be a party to this thing that Mr. Chick proposed.

"I won't have it!" he continued grandly, referring to the wrong done to his innocence by the cutting word "slight."

He had no idea that Leo would leave him, and had not meant what he said when he told her to do so. A young woman in her situation, with no more money or friends,—in short, so unfortunate and so powerless,—would be a fool, Mr. Chick thought, to quarrel with her bread and butter; and he reckoned that Leo knew that as well as he. Therefore he could safely stand on his dignity, and have it distinctly understood and acknowledged that he carried on business legitimately. He was especially desirous to establish this point because he knew the girls were aware that he had slighted work during the forewoman's absence.

"I couldn't do poor work," repeated Leo, in the dazed way she had under a shock.

"I won't have it!" again exclaimed Mr. Chick, who, since he had once begun to repel implications against the legitimacy of his operations, could not, with unimpaired loftiness, fail to continue in the same high strain. "I won't have it—this talk about poor work! As though I wanted poor work!"

By this time Mr. Chick felt so virtuous, and was so

intent on making his virtue manifest to others,—for he as well as Leo became conscious that they had listeners,—that he raised his voice proudly and said, with strict reference to the effect upon the attentive girls,—

“I think you had better leave—accusing me of wanting poor work!”

Mr. Chick had gone too far. The shop was as still as though not a soul were in it. Could it be that Leo was “discharged,” after all?

“You can’t mean it,” she said, in a low, changed voice. “Do you?”

The girls were listening breathlessly. There was no time to ponder. Mr. Chick was under heavy pressure—and pride conquered.

“Of course I mean it,” he said.

What was there for Leo but to traverse the length of the familiar shop, by the pitying, amazed faces, out to the closet where, so many years ago, she had first hung her shawl and bonnet and made a mistake in the hook,—how many changes had taken place at Chick’s since then!—put on her things, and part from her “place”?

Miss Pratt, poor soul and weak in so many ways, but rich and strong in some, came to Leo in the closet. No “drive” of Mr. Chick’s could prevent the simple seamstress from this; and then the two women, united lately in the fellowship of similar sorrow, both equally poverty-stricken now in that tender and exclusive love which both so much needed, flung their arms round each other and cried. A Christian and an “Infidel”—they were both loyal spirits.

“I shall come to see you,” said Miss Pratt at length; “and—I got you this place. I wish I could get you another, but—”

“Yes, I know,” said Leo. “You couldn’t. You mustn’t try, nor be troubled about me. I think there will be a



way for me somehow, somewhere. Lately I have a great deal of — I don't know what to call it! Something that stays me and makes me not afraid. I have, really. When everything is crashing and breaking up, I don't tremble. There's a foundation and a center to rest on in it all. I feel as if just trying to do right is somehow at the bottom of everything, and as if nothing under that can give way. So" — kissing her lovingly and assuming a cheerful countenance, as one who resolutely faces what is before him — "I am not afraid for myself. Don't be afraid for me. There will surely be a way, if I only keep striving."

Mr. Chick was already repentant. There were two conditions under which he regretted ill-treating another and was liable to become obsequious — when it injured himself, and when that other had attained success without any help from him, and, in fact, in spite of him; and here Mr. Chick was in the midst of a "drive," and nobody but Mrs. Chick herself able to fill Leo's place. Even Mrs. Chick was not fully able now, for she had been a long time out of the shop, and might reasonably be supposed to have "got her hand out" for tailoring when she got it in for nursing.

But Mr. Chick could not show any relenting before the watchful girls. He hoped that Miss Pratt had gone to Leo to persuade her to remain. Perhaps she would advise her to ask to be reinstated, which would afford him an exalted means of retaining her.

When Leo came out of the closet, however, she was dressed to go, and after bidding all the others — who, somewhat to Mr. Chick's chagrin, flocked round her — a rather tremulous good-by, she approached him and held out her hand. She wanted to be truly large, charitable, generous; and her idea of what it was to be all this did not allow her to pass bitter judgments or cherish petty hatreds.

Mr. Chick shook hands and said, "I don't think I've got the change for settling—I'll carry it to you"; and then Leo went out,—down over the stairs, so clean now, because Mr. Chick's quarrel with the other tenant was over long ago, and that refractory individual brought to submission,—Mr. Chick gazing, as though *he* were bewildered, at the door through which she had departed.

All day there was a strange hush in the shop. Mr. Chick wished they would make a noise—wished they would talk. He fancied the girls looked upon him as a kind of ogre. When they did speak, it seemed to him they whispered. Nobody said a word about what had happened. Why? Because, as Mr. Chick believed, they all considered that he had done a contemptible thing, but could not say so before him. He would wager their tongues would run fast enough if he were not there.

Then, besides, there was another point: they might report what they knew—that he had done inferior work, and was going now to do more. Well, let them. The one that ventured on that should follow Leo in quick time. On the whole, he did not much fear that.

It was a consolation to Mr. Chick to think that he would have an opportunity for private conversation with Leo when he went with the money. He had had his design in not paying her. He wondered what his wife would say to what he had done. He dreaded to tell her, yet trusted not a little to her maneuvering to extricate him with intact majesty from his dilemma. Mrs. Chick, having had no part in discharging Leo, could go, without loss of stateliness, and even solicit her to return. Thus he hoped to repair the damage and avert the inconvenience which his increasingly imperious temper had brought upon him.

It astonished those who noticed her to see Leo going home in working hours. What had happened to brin\_

about this unprecedented proceeding? Of course it soon became known that she had been dismissed. It looked, from the outside, very much as if the punishments of God were pursuing her. In the hour when she was proving herself equal to bearing with equanimity and trustfulness the ills of life,—the hour of conquest,—she appeared, to the eyes that beheld her from a distance, the most humbled and undone. There is such a thing as triumph even in the gutter; and she was not exactly there.

Mr. and Mrs. Chick were consulting together in their own parlor, on the evening after Leo had been sent away, when Seth Dayne was shown in. Mrs. Chick had become a thin-faced woman with brows more thunderous than ever, and was now fanning herself as though she were whipping somebody.

The interview was short, but it put an end to the scheming which it interrupted. Seth had come without his sister's knowledge, determined that she should be spared any further dealings with Mr. Chick, and also determined that the latter should understand that he, Seth, was able and willing to protect and support his sister, and that neither she nor any who belonged to her were at all crushed or dismayed by the consequences of Mr. Chick's despotism. When this errand was done, he went out again.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A NEW "PLACE."

SETH was almost glad that Leo's long service to the tailor was over once for all. Perhaps now could be realized his wish of having her, instead of his mother, as presiding genius at home. There was grievous need of improvement in that home.

Seth, though no longer exactly young, still had no thought of ever making around himself a dearer home. He was not quite prepared, even now, to break entirely with his mother, "and," said he sternly to himself, "I'll never ask a woman to live where I can't live. That is, where I can't live in peace."

Now he drew pleasant pictures of what his sister's tidy housekeeping would soon make of their present home. That was his plan, and the one he intended to set forth to Leo. Poor Seth! The old are usually jealous of displacement, and he did not rightly calculate the resistance which his mother would make to giving up any part of her long-held dominion.

His sister knew better than he the difficulties in the way of the undertaking; but when he proposed it, with that infrequent lighting up of the face which made him almost a boy again, she could not bear to dash his hope all at once. Besides, it might be that by managing carefully she could accomplish something.

So she began trying to make a home for Seth and all

of them. At first her mother was glad of assistance, but it was only so long as her own methods were strictly adhered to, her own government perfectly honored. The daughter strove wisely, delicately, patiently, to introduce reforms, but there was only small headway made; and at length Mrs. Dayne, who scented a purpose to wrest the headship from her, assured her children that she penetrated their minds, and that they might be certain that not while she lived would she relinquish the administration of her house. She was not yet disqualified, she said, to do in it as she always had done.

It was plain to both Seth and Leo that, in spite of her vigorous decisiveness, their mother's feelings were deeply hurt. She attributed their action to a desire to supplant her on account of the failing powers of age, and her whole spirit was up in arms to resist their encroachments. That spirit, unless harshly and forcibly quelled, as they would never quell it, would be conqueror till death.

It was well, then, so they concluded, not to embitter her remaining years by continuing an opposition like the recent one, which, at best, could effect so little. Leo must find another "place." She could not allow herself to drift idly, with no special occupation.

Seth, though for the most part blinded by familiarity, was occasionally made solicitous for her health by observing how wasted she was, and would gladly have retained her still at home, if she had liked; but he saw, as she did, that in order to be most content she must be filling a station of more decided usefulness.

She did not tell what experiences she met with in seeking a new situation. She went out every day on her quest. Seth's heart ached for her when he met her at tea; but there was no help for her. She must continue to go, and ask, and be rejected, until at last she might obtain employment.

Only once did she break down before any of them; and that, she said, was only because she was thinking of "other things"—other than the indifferent tailors who had help enough and to spare, and who briskly refused her even the lowliest position, until, as she told Seth on the one occasion referred to, it seemed as if there was no use for her "in the whole earth—to anybody—for anything. Oh, Roland!"

And Seth knew that his sister was still crying for her place in that man's heart, and that that lost place was the "other things" of which her dreary search was poignantly reminding her; but Leo seldom spoke of Mr. Stuart. She did not overlook that he belonged to another, and she was endeavoring to respect that fact, not only in deed, but in thought. She had no right, she knew, even to remember him with affection. She was trying to tear away from him her clinging love; trying to divert her mind from him; trying, from principle, to forget him; and the others, seeing this, followed her lead in avoiding his name.

At length she procured the long-sought new situation; but it was in an adjoining town. She must go to it by train. So once more began the regular going out in the early morning and the returning at evening, as in her youthful time when she commenced life with Mr. Chick—a time that intervening years were pushing into the distance. Now, as then, she was starting humbly—not quite at the pulling out of bastings, but as a common sewing-woman.

There is infinite comfort in an unchanging ideal unfalteringly pursued. Then the paths may be various, the vicissitudes many, the fluctuations great, but the purpose is one—a rounded, complete, perfect thing. So Leo was not unsupported in the new situation, though she was soon aware that her fame had followed her, that at least

a general unfavorable account of her had been received by those around her; for there is nothing harder to be rid of than a bad name, and there had certainly been causes enough, and various enough, now, to fasten such a name upon her.

These people knew Mr. Chick, and after Seth's refusal to allow Leo to return to his establishment, that gentleman's pride caused him to remark mysteriously, and as constantly as possible, that he had discharged Miss Dayne "for reasons that I know, sir," and which, as he hinted, nothing, sir, could induce him to let anybody else know.

The nameless air that hangs about those who know they have a right to show a contempt for you if they choose, and who restrain themselves somewhat only because they are so good as to do so, became very noticeable to poor Leo, who was too well used to that mien to be deceived.

For a time she expected to be discharged again. It was quite likely. She contemplated the possibility with calm patience. She had no reason to look for smooth things. She had dared the world. Could she be placed again exactly as she was before, only knowing all she had learned since, she would still dare it in like manner. She would therefore bear the consequences well.

Her newly found employer was an elderly man, with what might be called a neutral face, except for eyes which, by sometimes surprising you with a sudden twinkling shrewd pleasantness, caused you to suspect that, after all, a good deal more thinking was going on behind them than their owner saw fit to tell of; but if so, you never — as a fresh young girl near Leo said when the latter ventured some such opinion — would be any the wiser for it.

Leo was not discharged. She fulfilled her duties faultlessly, troubling no one. As the weeks went by the way grew easier. She knew that her work gave satisfaction,

and the kindly glance of the surprising eyes made her feel at ease with them.

As to her female companions, she made but slow progress with them, and it was with sinking courage, quickly stayed again, that she observed many a little hint and thrust — the sort of things which one wakes up at night heavy-hearted over — that showed them rooted in prejudice and quite certain they were right.

She was coming to lie in wait for and snatch every opportunity, however small, of serving others. She could do so little that she must be sure not to let that little go undone; but even her acts of quiet helpfulness toward these were repelled with coldness or disdain: for faith is stronger than sight — faith in evil when we see good; and it is amazing how different the same act looks, according as it is viewed in the light of a previously established reputation for sanctity or of one for sinfulness.

These seamstresses were not to be deceived, they would have Leo understand, by any put-on virtue. It was all done to curry favor and make them think she was something fine; but they would show her that she could not play that game on them! They knew all about her; and many and harsh were their condemnations, in her hearing, of "infidelity," though they never otherwise attacked her religious position.

But even the most positive opinions change in time — a long time; and Leo, if she could never reach the many who had heard ill of her, if life was all too short a term in which to "live down" the wide slanders of her name, could yet, within the contracted circle where she moved, win slowly upon tenacious prepossessions. This she did.

The fresh young girl next to her — too fresh and young to have learned never to trust appearances — was her first friend; and afterward there were others. But it could never be that Leo would receive precisely the same usage



that an unsullied reputation would have insured. Earth never perfectly forgives a sin; and, with earth, unwisdom, or what is considered unwisdom, is sin. It rarely discerns any difference—at least, not at the time.

No, not even from her friends could it ever be that Leo would receive precisely the same usage that an unsullied reputation would have insured. There would be moments, even when she was with them, in which she must realize her humiliating disadvantages. Those who themselves believed in her would not always be strong enough not to shrink from being known in some places as her associates; but finding no staunch and stable friend is what may give one a strength in himself worth more to him than all strength in others—the strength to stand alone, and all alone.

Well is it to combine with this strength the other strength, not to cherish wrath against the feeble ones who have taught you to do without them; and Leo came at last to cherish no wrath—to be able to say, while wiping away some secret tears at the hurt of cutting instances of this cowardice, “They are only children yet, and have a great deal still to acquire.”

So the months coiled into years. She went back and forth with the old regularity, meeting few of the old acquaintances, except Miss Pratt, who did not forget her promise to come and see Chick’s former forewoman.

Occasional letters came from Mr. Thayer, who failed not to bear her in mind and exhort her to return.

Once only she saw Miss Stuart, now living alone in her quiet dwelling, save for a superannuated female relative invited to bear her company a part of the time. Leo happened to be in Brackton of a few errands. Her eyes met Miss Stuart’s. The latter’s instantly dropped, and she passed on without sign.

Leo found herself made very weak and trembling by

this encounter. It was like coming suddenly close to Roland. Miss Stuart looked worn, Leo thought, and questioned why; for, though living just at the back of the hill from the familiar house where she had made her one memorable visit, she never inquired, never heard, anything of importance concerning its mistress or her brother.

Mr. King brought to Utopia all the news he could get about them, but as he was one whom Mrs. Dayne regarded with aversion, chiefly on account of some reprehensible transactions of his in vegetables which, if not frozen, were certainly "touched," he could not, much to his regret, tell it to her.

The fact was, he could not tell to anybody nearly as much as he wished he could; for Miss Stuart, if, as of old, she sometimes talked with the pedler about other people's affairs, never did of late about her own and Roland's and Roland's wife's—no, not even when Mr. King's burning curiosity drove him to put to her a few leading questions.

Occasionally, too, Leo fell in with members of the Church of the Intercessor. She wondered what they thought of her, whether they were aware why she no longer appeared among them; but she never knew. She had been more closely connected with Mr. Thayer and Miss Fessenden than with any of the others. No one did more than bow.

Thus her days were spent—making herself, without ostentation, without expecting appreciation, understanding, or reward, as much of a blessing as she could. Often she was sensible of leaving a favorable impression where she went, or of winning a golden opinion. Then she would see all this changed by the whispers that followed her everywhere.

Being thoughtful for others in small things, bearing

patiently what came to be borne, and the constant trials at home, keeping up to her highest efficiency at the shop, caring particularly for "little" Luke,—these things formed the sphere of usefulness to which she was restricted; for the poor and wretched in her neighborhood, whom she would fain have visited and helped, resented her presence or suspected her motives.

Across all this came, at times, the wild wish to run away—to fly so far that she could never be found nor known—to begin new and clear—to forget and be forgotten; but this was a mood that could not be indulged. Sometimes even a twinkle of merriment was in her eyes at the expense of the godly, who looked at her in solemn and dutiful condemnation; and it is to be feared that she even enjoyed making occasional movements calculated to increase their ludicrous horror of herself.

Sometimes travelers on the cars thanked her for some small favor which her watchfulness had enabled her to confer, or remarked her placid countenance, which on one occasion so moved a small boy, whom she had escorted through a dark alley of which he stood in fear, that he remarked to her, with interrogative candor, "I guess you've got religion?"

She found consolation, now, in earning and spending for all at home, and in giving what she could to various causes, and in answer to the various general calls that calamitous visitations, in one form or another, are always causing to be made; for forced deprivation often teaches unselfishness, and loss of personal hope makes room for the indwelling of larger charities.

Leo came to be truly cheerful. Her frequent smile was genuine. Neither earth nor hell can shake forever the peace of him who clings to rectitude.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE TWO LOVERS.

AND how fared it at present with the two men who had loved Leo?

Jack was the same vacillating creature as before. He had thought, when his rival was entirely out of the way, that there might be hope for him; and how he had wished then that he had never denied to Leo what his religious views were! If he had not, he would have had now a great advantage on his side.

When she began going to the next town to work, Jack had managed to go to the railroad station, with the numerous errands of the New England Machine, at such hours that he would be thrown in her way; and when some of those old companions of his again bantered him offensively, he had not resisted them, for he thought it would all help to drive Leo to him, so that he could make, at last, that reparation of his—marry her. Thus, more cruelly than ever, she had been wounded in the house of her friends; but somehow Jack did not, even now, feel encouraged to press his suit.

One night, however, something occurred which told Leo what he had not the boldness to reveal—that he loved her. She had experienced a strange desire to go and look at the familiar house where Roland used to live, where Miss Stuart lived now. It was irresistible—she must see that house on the other side of the hill. The snow was on the ground and there was a moon,

Supper being over, she put on her things, saying, "I think I'll walk over to Brackton."

Seth, supposing she wanted to make some ordinary purchases, said, "I'll go for you"; but she would not let him.

As she went out she met Jack, who wished to accompany her, but did not persist when he perceived that she preferred he should do as he had intended — spend an hour with Seth.

The weather was cold, but the happy little brook was still murmuring of love — Roland's and Leo's still? When she came to it she paused a moment to hear its babbling speech. Winter could not check it, Summer could not tire it.

She passed through the stirring part of Brackton, with its bright windows and brisk evening trade; noticed Mr. Chick's new shop, or rather store, with its sign, which now read, "T. Chick, Clothier"; climbed the hill, and came before the familiar house that stood out darkly in the bright moonlight. How long it was getting to be since she was last in that house! The years were going.

There was no light within the dwelling. From the bell-handle depended a stalactite of ice. The glistening snow lay untracked all about, as though the inmates were dead and this were their forgotten tomb. Either Miss Stuart was away (she went on long visits now, though not to Roland — his home was wretched enough without any complications with his sister), or else she was sitting by her fire of coals, thinking, thinking, thinking, as she used to do, and listening to what the tongues of flame said now.

The bare branches of the trees cast sharp shadows on the roof and sides of the house, and on the snow looked as if drawn in ink. Once Roland had called Leo out of this house to notice some of these very trees — the cherry

trees. Then they were shedding their white petals so thickly that they were making a little snow-storm worth seeing, he had said.

After a while Leo descended the hill, and came again into active Brackton, where most of the shops were closed or closing. By this time the moon was low; but physical terrors lose their hold on women like her, who have conquered terrors of the spirit which make all other terrors naught.

So she went lightly on, and was just leaving the thick buildings of Brackton and entering upon the lonely portion of the way, when, a little in front of her on the other side of the street, a man, standing still, lit a cigar, and the flash, close to his face, showed it to be Jack.

He had not followed her to find out her business, but he had been unwilling that she should return alone over this piece of the road, and so had come as far as here, and had been waiting ever since, in order to follow her home stealthily for her protection, and never let her know; and he was beguiling the time with smoking.

Leo had approached too quietly for him to hear her; and she had seen his heart at last—seen that he loved her—seen the years behind her rise up and bear witness to it—seen many things which before had been hard to understand explained by this illuminated face in the dark.

She advanced now, on the opposite sidewalk, and went by. Jack came on, keeping at some distance, so as not to attract attention; but she heard him. Over the solitary strip of country, past the brook, by the black wall of the New England Machine, Jack was coming on. Not till she was safe within doors did his faithful guardianship cease.

It would be hard to tell fully how this episode affected Leo. That it touched her profoundly, and occupied much

of her thought for many weeks, is certain. That it inspired her with a new reverence for Jack, for his silent attachment, his unseen trueness, is certain. That it presented to her the question whether she could ever love this man rightly, in return for such love in him, is certain. If not, what could she do for him to prove afresh her appreciation of his quality?

Her mind was very active and agitated; but to the one great question, Could she ever love Jack with all her heart, as he deserved to be loved? the answer was slowly making.

There would be hours, she knew, when her spirit, bound to his, would be more grievously alone than if she had him not. There is one loneliness more lonely than being alone: that of having some one with you and being still alone. There would be hours when she would sorely realize that no power could make him feel the force of the sentiments that moved her most deeply, hours when she would desolately know that his eyes were forever blind to the things she could most surely see.

He would be kind, uncritical, affectionate. It would be pleasant to be gathered to somebody's heart, and Jack was ready, eager, to gather her to his. A great many of their days would be agreeable days. It would be only sometimes, perhaps, that that knowledge of being wedded and yet not wedded would bear heavily.

Then she tried to think of it in another way — tried to think that she was overnice, that she was rejecting an opportunity to do some work because just the work she wanted was withheld. Then she tried to think it was selfish to cling to that better, fitter, finer love she knew of, when Jack needed her and she could perhaps make him happy, and when he might never know the lack that she would know, because he might never have experience of any better, fitter, finer love than theirs.

But she did not long make the mistake of reasoning that in marriage with Jack she could confer upon him what she would not have in him—happiness. Let no one idly imagine that when another is living on a plane of thought and feeling greatly different from his own, continued contact and increased intimacy will bring him nearer. It will only make matters worse. Withdrawal is the only remedy; for uncongeniality between persons is as changeless as any other antagonism in nature.

And let no woman count surely upon even endearing herself lastingly, by the power of devotion and high effort, to her inferior. He will not well understand. Her very fineness is wasted upon him, probably even bores him; and when he sees that which is less fine, but better adapted, he will admire it more. The greater is about as incapable of supplying the needs of the lesser as the lesser is of supplying the needs of the greater, and the two are likely to have an equal sense of each other's insufficiency.

Some such thoughts were Leo's; and, at all events, she knew that a diviner thing than being Jack's wife was possible to her. She could not consciously and deliberately step into a place where she would be obliged to do violence to her higher faculties by not using them.

Besides, marriage with one when we love another better is adultery: yes, to that Eye whose beam we can only feel—that Eye never once deceived by man's childish pomps and seemings.

That was settlement.

Moreover, if Jack was not best for Leo, she was not best for him.

That was consolation.

So she could be nothing more than cordial and tenderly friendly to him, and hope that that better love than he knew anything about would come to him, too.



Jack, always watching her, noticed the augmented tenderness and seemed to divine the cause. She had been thinking of him and had come to a conclusion. Roland Stuart had won her — she could not love another so well; and Jack, poor fellow, wondered for a while, with a void, cheerless heart, why things went as they did in this world: some men so rich and so blessed without ever caring for the riches and the blessing, and other men, to whom those same things would be salvation, seeking them always so vainly.

Jack could not make it out; but at length he thought he made out this concerning himself — that no woman would ever love him, love him really, strongly, deeply, as, since he knew Leo, he had dreamed of being loved — by her. No woman ever had so loved him. It was useless to think of it any more. That sort of love was not for him.

He did not much care what he did now. He could never gain Leo, and the fates were against him anyway — they always had been. It looked as if the intention was, from the beginning, that he should go to the bad.

No doubt a man who had precisely the right wife could be a model; but most women weren't worth the having. Their constancy didn't amount to much. Jack never saw but one that he would trust to love a man through everything; and she was not for him. He could not see that there was any good thing for him. In short, he was for a time dejected, desperate, savage, but afterward fell back into about his early moods and ways.

It was strange that no one, not even he, had taken alarm, of late, at Leo's physical condition; but her color was so high — sometimes — that perhaps, after all, it was no such great wonder, especially as Jack had uttered so many false danger-cries in years past.

Nevertheless, all unknown to those who would miss her

most, prodigal Death was making ready a "place" for her—yes, two places. Hundreds of miles away from the metropolis whose flaring light on the sky Roland and she used to watch at evening, out across the pink and yellow and green States depicted on the hall map to which he led her and pointed out the black dot of a city where their future home might be,—there Death was divorcing the luckless marriage which had lost Leo a place more precious to her than life. There Death was making that place empty for her again.

It would not be long before Roland Stuart, an undeceived, a disciplined, an instructed, a broadened, an humbled man, would be free from the bitter bondage which he had borne faithfully because he had vowed; yes, borne faithfully, if stormily. It would not be long before the trifling life which had put its confidence in empty things and artificial appearances, but which, gripped by his stern tests of merit (yes, though *he* had fallen) had soon stood revealed to his derisive gaze at its right value, and which had taken in that severe school of union with him its first effectual lesson in the worth of Reality,—it would not be long before that slight life would pass: perhaps to new teachers having infinite pity for its frailty, for the folly and the foible and the failure, having infinite patience with its slowness and its dullness in learning better ways; in learning, perchance, that there is no manner so courtly as that of righteousness, no grace so high-born as that of principle.

But Death was generous. He was not content to be making ready the old place with Roland. Perhaps Leo would be too weary to take it so late. Then she could go with Death to a place familiar to him—a place of rest, long rest, dewy rest, away from everything that had made her weary.

What! And away from Roland, too?

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### A PUZZLED QUESTIONER.

It would seem so. Yet it might not be. Seth, with a white, frightened face, prayed that it might not, on that morning when Leo did not go to work, and when her lips were red — with the blood that wet them, and when he waited with palpitating heart for the doctor to come out of her room and tell him privately what it all meant.

Was Leo, his sweet sister, going — to die? He would not believe it. It was so sudden! She had never been ill, and — consumption (Seth hated the name that his fears suggested) did not attack one in a moment. Alas! he remembered now with terror how long she had been failing. Perhaps it had been preying upon her secretly. But she could be saved. It must be that she could. He knew it. He would send her away somewhere — to another climate — to change of scene.

Then the doctor came out. "No, she may not die — not for a long time; or she may. Another hemorrhage such as this might prove fatal at once; but," with an encouraging air, "we hope we shall have no more hemorrhage."

Poor Seth hugged the little comfort he could get from this, and sent word to the New England Machine by the "little fellow," who had been standing as shadow to his brother all the while, that he, Seth, would not come to work "till Leo is better," adding in an explanatory

whisper to the "little fellow," departing silently, "There ain't anybody but myself, you know,—I don't care who it is,—that I could trust to see that she's taken care of."

Love is the best nurse. It may not know technicalities, but it knows better things. It knows tenderness, for one thing. So there began to be a nursing of Leo which only love had taught. There began, too, to be exhibitions of kindness from other quarters — late triumphings of human charity and toleration over human harshness and bigotry.

Leo had more visitors, now that she was laid low and could not see them, than ever before in her troubled life. More delicacies than she could taste were brought, these days, to the little stand at the head of her bed. Many who did not care to associate with her when she was well plumed themselves upon their virtue in calling upon her when she was sick.

"I didn't know people did care so much for me," said she, quite melted, to Seth. "Perhaps it's because I've been stiff and unapproachable that they never came before. It seems now just as if I were like others, doesn't it? It seems—new; and good."

Then, after a pause, in which a shade has come over her thought, "Do you suppose they'll keep on liking me if I get well?"

"Yes, sis,—yes. I—guess so. At any rate, I want you to get well and try 'em."

"Yes, I will—if I can; but I'd like to live where the people would be so to me always. It seems now, when everybody's so kind, as if I'd been looking at life wrong side out all this time, and was just getting a glimpse of the right side. How much brighter 'tis on the right side! I suppose, now, there are some in the world who never had any trouble."

"I guess everybody has some, sis."

"A great one, I mean. People to whom it wouldn't

seem a bit odd to be liked all the time. I know there are that kind, of course. Rest wouldn't be so pleasant to those people as it would to me, would it? I can't think how strange and new it would be to me, nor how I should feel, if I were taken, all at once, where nobody despised me. I should have to get used to it; but just that alone—having nobody to despise me—would make happiness for me."

Seth, having an uncomfortable suspicion that reflectiveness of mind tended to deterioration of matter, did not encourage his patient to contemplate any state of existence save the present, and therefore often reminded her that, according to her own belief, we have no certainty of any life but this.

"No, no certainty of that, and no certainty of the contrary," she answered; "but I'm sure it's all right, and best too, whichever way it is."

Miss Pratt, good soul, so weak and so strong all in one, and with the weakness and the strength so ludicrously mixed, was one of the very first to make her appearance after Leo was down.

She came again and again, not minding the walk after tea into the Utopian neighborhood; and she produced, from under her threadbare old shawl, little offerings of fruit and confectionery, saying, "I don't want to put it on mother to cook anything nice,—mother's growin' old,—and I wish I could get something better, and more of it, for Leo. Only Mr. Chick! He's nippin' closer than ever!"

Seth, who always went out from the sick-room to see her and reported on his sister's health, smiled and implored, "Don't bring any more. Leo will gladly take the will for the deed."

He understood well enough that this friendly creature, without the polite art to hide that it was an ever-present

thought with her that the gifts had cost her something, gave, nevertheless, a genuine heart-offering; and if, next Christmas-day, Miss Pratt, calling to mind that the Scripture saith, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days," thanked God for the infallible truth of His Book, and for the ten-dollar bill which He had sent her in an envelope with the post-mark of the metropolis upon it,—when she did not know a soul in that whole city, thus irrevocably confirming her belief in special providences,—Seth Dayne had no quarrel with her because she gave the glory to the Source from which undeniably come, in the last analysis, all things whatsoever.

Then when Leo was better, Miss Pratt went in and sat with her a little, and was glad when they were left alone together.

That was what she had been waiting for—an opportunity to talk with Leo alone. Perhaps her sick friend would see things differently, now that she was prostrate and perchance close to eternity.

Miss Pratt might be chosen, she thought, to speak just the very word that the Spirit would bless to the salvation of Leo's soul. Who could tell what one might bring to pass, even such a one as she, who did what he could and trusted the result with God? And though death-bed repentances were by no means the best, still it was possible, Miss Pratt was comforted in remembering, that one single moment, at the last, of real faith in the blood might save a soul.

The little tailoress felt it a heavy cross to do this thing. She had asked for heavenly guidance a great many times before the opportunity came. Seth had gone to Brackton that evening, and she was to sit with Leo until his return. There was no calculating how soon his long strides and anxiety about his charge would bring him back. Miss

Pratt felt unequal to the task devolving upon her, and so was fain to invoke again the promised aid, “. . . it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.”

Very timidly the tiny woman, startled at her own voice, asked, “May I pray?”

“Oh, assuredly you may,” was the cordial response, for Leo reverently respected Miss Pratt’s trueness of heart, and knew that in all the range of hearts, from smallest to greatest, it would be hard to find a truer; and if hearts are true, it does not so much matter that heads are false.

So Miss Pratt, very much embarrassed, and trembling at having a visible listener (it had ever been a great trial to her to “speak” in class or prayer-and-conference meeting, and now it was even harder), put up a request for the sick one’s spiritual restoration, that she might be led out of her error into the truth as it is in Jesus, that her soul might be saved from eternal perdition.

The little seamstress was so anxious and sincere in presenting her friend at the throne of grace as an unprecedentedly hopeless, benighted, miserable spirit that it brought a smile to Leo’s pale lips and added brightness to peacefulness of expression.

Rising from her knees, Miss Pratt caught sight of the lighted-up face on the pillow — a face touched, just then, with unscornful, loving pity for the little woman, with her little God, her little conceptions, her little fears.

Leo was thinking, “How I wish Miss Pratt, who is so good, could get sweeter, happier views of things!”

Miss Pratt thought, “Leo looks really beautiful. Oh, if she could only be saved!” and in her fervor she exclaimed aloud, “Oh, if you only loved Jesus!” Then, with tears in her eyes and the eloquence of simple earnestness, “Don’t give him up! He’s precious — he’s my all! Oh, if you only loved Jesus!”

“I do,” said Leo.

"Then you're not an infidel now!" cried Miss Pratt joyfully.

"I am what is called an infidel — yes. Just the same."

"I didn't know an infidel could love Jesus," said Miss Pratt helplessly.

"Oh, yes! I suppose what makes an 'infidel,' as you say, is belief, or rather," smiling, "what you would call nothing but disbelief — and we shouldn't agree about that; but an 'infidel' can love what he doesn't have the same kind of faith in that the rest of the world has — don't you see? Can love Jesus, and yet not trust in him as a savior. An 'infidel' can love whatever seems to him lovely or glorious in anybody; and Jesus (supposing the record correct and of something actual, not mythical, you know) had so much that was lovely and glorious in him!"

"But he was God," said Miss Pratt, with an uneasy sense that just loving Jesus would not do, after all.

"Yes, I know you think so; and I don't — can't. So let's just love each other and agree to disagree about that."

Leo's unpolemic speech and manner, very different from the belligerent buttonhole-maker's in good and regular Baptist standing, with her controversial wounds never quite healed, went far toward ending Miss Pratt's effort on Leo's behalf. A soft answer can sometimes do more than turn away wrath: it can even inspire one of the religious majority with some notion that there is effrontery in always approaching one of the religious minority in the character of missionary.

But Leo was ill. She might die. When Miss Pratt thought of this, she returned to the attack.

"I suppose you think you'll get up again. I hope you will," she said; "but you may not. Shouldn't you be afraid to die without makin' your peace with God?"



Leo kept silence a little while, thinking. How could she make her friend know all, or even some, of the things she would like her to know; make her know, for one thing, that with herself, and with others of similar thought, it could be nothing but peace with God continually?

"Yes," she answered at length, "I suppose I might be afraid to die if I were not at peace with God."

"And are you?" curiously.

"Yes."

Miss Pratt was silent now. She was puzzled.

"I never saw anybody so queer as you are," she finally went on. "You say you're an infidel—"

"No, no!" interrupted Leo pleasantly. "I said so once; but what I said just now was, that I am one of those people who are called infidels. You must bear that in mind."

"I don't see what difference it makes. But, anyway, you say you're one o' them that are called infidels, and then you say you're at peace with God; and you look like it, too,"

A pause.

"I don't believe you are an infidel!—one o' them that are called infidels, I mean. Are you? Now really?" and apparently Miss Pratt would not have been much surprised to hear Leo declare that she had only been playing a part all these years.

"I am certainly one of the people who are called—by some at any rate—infidels," said Leo, laughing at her friend's increased perplexity.

"Well," inquired Miss Pratt, by way of getting this troublesome word defined and the whole matter reduced to manageable shape, "could an infidel, or one o' them that are called infidels, enjoy hearing 'There is a fountain filled with blood' sung round his dyin' bed?"

Leo appearing not to have a good assurance on this point, Miss Pratt shook her head lugubriously and said she was afraid not.

"You see," resumed Leo, "that I disbelieve those things that you believe. A great many disbelieve them, and perhaps have concluded that the whole of religion is to do right; and such are called infidels. But it seems to me that they are only altogether outside of and above those things that they disbelieve. Now you can't measure anything rightly with a measure that's wrong."

"N-o-o," said Miss Pratt, as one who hesitates to commit himself.

"But such people as I speak of are measured by these Christian dogmas, and are called infidels with reference to them; but if the dogmas are wrong, they are not a true measure, and the name attached to anybody through that measurement is not a right name. But," and Leo looked commiseratingly at her timid friend, "you have no occasion to be alarmed — the great majority stand on your side."

"Yes," said Miss Pratt, with animation and pleasure.

"I remember, as I say, the time when I applied that term infidel in the same way myself; but that was before I had thought about it. Freethinking — I like that word! — has seed-time and maturity and harvest, and it was only seed-time with me then; and certainly the term isn't accurate when so applied."

"Why ain't it accerit?"

"Well, let me see. How shall I explain myself? It isn't accurate because it doesn't tell the whole story. Admitting that it tells, in a way, the negative side of it, it says nothing about the positive side — don't you see?"

"No, I don't," said Miss Pratt candidly.

After pondering a little, Leo continued —

"Well, now, suppose there was a Jew — yes, we'll say

a Jew, though it will hardly illustrate so well as to take a person of some other religion; but we may understand it better. Suppose there was a Jew who began to think and think, and after a while came to the conclusion that Jesus was the Messiah — that Christianity was true; and suppose he came out from the Jews, and joined the Christian Church, and kept on firmly in that way: would people describe him by saying that he was a deserter from Judaism,—infidel, unfaithful, that is,—or by saying that he was a convert to Christianity?"

"They might say he used to be a Jew, and wasn't now," said Miss Pratt, who did not yet quite see why these questions, and thought it safe not to concede anything till compelled to.

"Would that describe him in the clearest, truest way, do you think, after he had been *loyal* to himself and to his new belief? Now, nobody can be loyal to any new belief that is at all opposed to his old one without disbelieving his old one — without being, in that sense, disloyal, or infidel, to it; but would it be fair to describe the Jew we are talking about only by saying what he was not? For, as to that, there would be a good many other things, besides, which he was not. Wouldn't it be nearer right to describe him by saying what he *was* now?"

"I s'pose they'd say — they'd have to — that he was a Christian."

"Yes, they would name him by what he believed, not by what he disbelieved."

"Folks'd be likely to say," continued Miss Pratt, who was still a little inclined to be contrary-minded in this matter of the Jew, "that he was a Christian converted from Judyism."

"I think they would," said Leo. "Now when a Christian begins to think and think, and comes to the conclusion that Christianity (the dogmas, I mean) is not true,

and that opposite things are true, why should he be described as an infidel to Christianity, when he's a convert from it to something else?"

"That's different," said Miss Pratt. "You can't be converted to anything from Christianity. It's only turn-in' away from Christianity; for there's nothin' so good as that. There's nothin' to be converted to."

"I think there is," said Leo quietly. "Do you suppose that when one begins to reject the things that do not accord with reason, one doesn't begin to accept other things that do accord with it? Do you suppose that when one begins to put away thoughts that are ungrounded and idle, one doesn't begin to cultivate those that are grounded and not idle?"

"God's thoughts are not our thoughts," said Miss Pratt rather irrelevantly, but with the certainty that nothing scriptural could be amiss.

"Do you suppose that when one begins to withdraw from the leadership of Faith, and to distrust it, one doesn't commit himself to the leadership of Knowledge, and trust that instead? Do you suppose that when, on account of disagreement, one ceases to be a Christian, it is for any reason except that he has become something else—an adherent of another system, an opposite system, what is called the scientific system? Isn't that—think of the whole great change it implies!—something to be converted to? If it were not something, a decided, differing something, why should those who go over to it be complained of?"

Miss Pratt did not clearly understand. Leo's words sounded to the spinster like something out of a book, and therefore necessarily more or less incomprehensible.

"To be sure," continued Leo, "such have no creed, unless it's the whole body of proven truth; but when a Christian rejects Christianity, he doesn't simply reject it.

For what makes anybody relinquish old ideas? Isn't it new ones? So, as the prime meaning of the word infidel is *unfaithful, unbelieving*, it isn't justly descriptive, you see, of freethinkers. However, it isn't of any great consequence what we are called — I was only thinking of the perversion of the word; but when a Christian begins to disbelieve in a ransom for his sins —”

“I thought you said you did believe in Christ, didn't you?” broke in Miss Pratt, getting more confused.

“Oh, no! I said I reverence fine character, but do not believe in any atonement. In short, I disbelieve the principal articles of doctrinal Christianity.”

“Oh!” said Miss Pratt, with the voice of one who expects further enlightenment.

“Why! Don't you understand, you ridiculous woman!” cried Leo, almost merrily. “I shall begin to think you have no proper notion of the sinfulness of heresy. Well,” feigning comical resignation, “I shall really have to explain. In the first place,—but I have explained that, haven't I?—I disbelieve that Jesus was God, because God made the law that every woman's child should be a child of man; and so He wouldn't (I mean it seems to me He-wouldn't) ever break the law. Besides, if Jesus was God, what grace to him or help to us would his character be?”

“Well, you know,” said Miss Pratt, beginning to get her bearings again, “he was human, too.”

“Then, second,” and Leo playfully kept count on her fingers, “I disbelieve that the suffering or death of one creature ever was a satisfaction for the sins of another. Of course I believe that the life of Jesus, and every noble life, can encourage us to overcome our sins; but that's a different thing from what's meant by Christians when they say they believe in Jesus. So this is number two.”

“The Bible — and it's the inspired Word of God”

(here the speaker showed more severity than at any time before)—“says there’s no other name but his under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” Miss Pratt was well versed in Scripture.

Leo did not court this conversation, and so said nothing. It could do no good. The little and imperfect pieces of her faith which she could show to Miss Pratt gave no fair idea of the whole. Who that, from an opposite opinion, has become convinced that in all things Truth and Reason are inseparable friends has not felt the impotence of partial and desultory statements to make clear the grand and blessed change and the justification, nay, necessity, for that change? But Miss Pratt would not stop here.

“I don’t s’pose you believe the Bible *is* inspired?” she said, with something like bitterness showing itself for the first time.

“Yes, parts of it; but only as other books—some others, I mean—are inspired. I think everything that is true in any book is the Word of God, and that everybody who utters anything truly great is inspired. That gives more honor to God, you see. But don’t let’s talk about these things any more. It’ll only stir up your feelings and make you unhappy. But I couldn’t let you think that somehow or other, underneath all, I was a ‘believer.’ I am not. The things I once accepted seem very absurd to me now. But it’s better that I shouldn’t tell you all I think.”

“I’m afraid you think too much,” said Miss Pratt doubtfully. “It isn’t best. There was a sermon lately on that. Seth ought to have told you about it. We’ve got a good pastor now; and he said that in some things we had to let God do our thinking for us.”

“God doesn’t want us to let Him do that part of our thinking for us that He made us capable of doing for our-

selves; and if we were called to give account of our gifts, I think one great question to us might well be, Did we use the faculties we know God gave us, or did we accept, instead, a book that somebody told us He gave us? But I don't want to force my views on you, nor attack your faith. Only I do wish I could make somebody understand how *great* God seems to me now."

She looked at Miss Pratt, to see if there was any prospect of making her understand. That lady's unresponsive face did not give a great deal of hope.

"It's so much happier," Leo continued, "to think of God as coming to people in every way; through other religions, and other persons, and other books, than just those that we've been taught to think divine. I'm glad there are so many helpful names given among men. It's so much happier, I mean, to find God in those other things as well as in these, and it makes Him so much greater."

"Well," said Miss Pratt bitingly,—and she felt it a duty to bite,—“I don't pretend to know anything about a God greater than the Bible tells of; and I don't want to know about any greater one. I should be afraid, really afraid, to speak as you do. But I'm glad you believe in any God."

"Well, I don't know as you would think I do," said poor exact Leo, now thoroughly in for it. "Because I can't say that I know so many things about God as you can, and as I used to. I am sure there is no God of special providences—of wonders. People who suffer enough learn that. Belief in such a God is superstition, I think."

"Oh, Leo, Leo!" ejaculated Miss Pratt.

"It is only That which has produced us and that we feel ourselves to have part in, the Something, the All,—I wish I had better ways of telling you what I mean!—

that we feel must be and do altogether right, that I trust in now; the principle, you know, that we feel there must be, somewhere, of justice: but it sustains me as much as the other. Only I don't know much more about it than this. I call it God for convenience, but I don't mean what you do when you say God."

"And you liable not to get well!"

"No, Mary, I don't think I shall ever get well."

Mary studied Leo in a long look. Was it possible that this young woman of shocking views thought she was going to die, and yet wasn't alarmed—nor anything?

"Leo!" she exclaimed. "You don't think so!"

All the bitterness was gone now.

"Yes, I do."

"What makes you think so?" Mary was a profound believer in supernaturally vouchsafed "warnings." "Have you had any signs?"

"No, no signs. I never notice signs now. But I think that I shall die—soon."

"Oh, don't!" said Mary, not quite meaning, "Don't die!" but rather, "Don't speak about it!"

"I couldn't help dying if I should bleed enough, you know; and it wouldn't be hard for me to go now. Not that I'm pining to go. I don't want you to think that. Only rest'll seem good when it comes resting-time; but I'm ready to stay. You can't think, though, nor hardly anybody, what a rest it would be to me; because nobody but me knows how hard it has been sometimes here, chiefly since I've been a freethinker. I never have told. I didn't dare to let Seth know, it would make him so angry."

"What would?"

"Why, to know all the things that come to anybody that—that defies the world. Whoever does has to pay. There's no escape; and I have paid."



"The world's terrible!" said Mary, in an awe-struck whisper, as one who listens to freezing tales from a participant in the horror. "If you had only taken advice! I wouldn't have the world against me. Nothin' could tempt me. But you never seemed to mind it. I wondered at you. But you did, after all."

"It has been hard to bear—yes; but one learns that the censure of a world that makes as many mistakes as this does is not worth minding, nor its praise worth having; and of course it was impossible for me ever to be sorry for taking the stand I did. Why, anything else would have been cheating! And I should have been a coward, too! Do you know I have a theory that a coward is the meanest form of humanity? A knave is a more hopeful character than a coward."

"Well, I never thought much about it."

"There's nothing to a coward. I'm afraid there isn't enough to him to repent. But a knave may do something so bad that it will make him repent and come out right at last; while a coward is a—"

"A kind of a sort of a great lump o' nothingness, you mean, don't you?" inquired Miss Pratt, brightly anticipating Leo.

"That's what I mean—yes; but where were we? Oh! We were speaking of its being hard to bear what I have had to. I was going to say that sometimes wrath, burning indignation, has been in me, and I have wanted to rise up, like a mighty whirlwind, and defend myself. Just the looks of people, alone, were enough sometimes to make a dead woman writhe."

"Oh, only looks," said Miss Pratt, a little disappointedly; for even the best of us enjoy personal reminiscences of noteworthy encounters. "Looks don't amount to very much."

"Oh, yes, they do!" said Leo. "Such looks as I mean.

Leering at me; and then they'd speak, often. Rough fellows, and even boys, that only know me by sight and reputation. My heart would be in my mouth when I saw I was going to meet a squad of them. You see, my being an 'infidel,' as people call it, made them believe everything about me. How I have dreaded them! I think they have been the worst; because others, if they did look at me strangely, and let me know by every little thing what they thought, wouldn't say anything dreadful."

"Was it anything very dreadful, what the others said?" inquired Miss Pratt, who, since the thing had happened, liked to hear about it.

"Oh, yes! Perhaps bawling after me, in the street, something about Jack. And all the time, almost everywhere and in everybody, that cool air of certainty that I was foul. No shaking it, after my change of views. I might just as well try to change the foundations of the hills. When you've once offended the world so much as I had, every low or stupid or suspicious or evil person can add testimony against you and be believed; and no carefulness'll be much defence to you. There's no appeal then except to the spirit of justice I was speaking of."

"I guess that's so," said Miss Pratt with shrewdness, inwardly thanking her stars that she had always kept on the right side of the world, the terrible, giant world. "Didn't you ever answer 'em?"

"No. I used to think that if I paid no attention, and was dignified, they'd know they were mistaken in me; but they only thought I was pretending to be better than I was. Then I got over being wrathful, and into a kind of despair—a dull drag. I couldn't find any use in living or trying any longer. Everything was such a complete failure with me. Not a single thing mine, of all that I wanted most; and rowdies hooting at me; and I so helpless, so impotent, to change anything! I looked

over all my past, and I couldn't think it had paid me to live, nor done any good. And Roland was married — he didn't care for me; and I, who loved him so and was almost his wife once, was counted — what? I said it was all unjust, and that there wasn't any use in holding to anything. Mary, I've passed through deep waters."

"I believe you," said Miss Pratt, in her awe-struck whisper.

"But there is a serene height, Mary, away above all care for these things; and I have found it. Sometimes I live there and sometimes not; but it is worth all it costs to have learned that there is such a height and that one *can* live there. But then I was bitter, maddened. I knew, as well as others, that I was faulty enough, but I said I was receiving stripes out of all proportion to my deserts; for when you have to be fighting unjust charges it isn't natural to feel your real unworthiness so much. I was tempted to *be* as wicked as they thought me. Something said, 'What benefit has come of trying to do right?'"

"That was the devil," said Mary promptly and with conviction.

It was useless to combat Mary's theory of a devil with anything more than a smile.

"Well," Leo said, "this much is certain: when we're hopelessly mixed in with what looks bad, and there's no help for it, there's a better way than to listen to anything that says it wouldn't be worse to be bad. If we think we're abused, we can always fall back on trying to be worthy of better usage than we're getting; and that's its own reward now, and all we need for now. We shouldn't get anything better, now, under your system, don't you see? And we can do the same — try to be worthy of better — if we know we've been rightly accused, and that we're only receiving our just dues. That's something

that'll stand by us whether our belief in the Trinity, or in future reward, does or not."

"Well, you've got to believe in them, too," said Mary stoutly.

"The things that it is essential we should believe would be made plain to us," Leo said. "I suppose it'll come more and more to be character instead of belief that people will look at in others."

She was already over-tired, having talked too long and too feelingly; but she added mildly, "Perhaps I shall know better what is true, and so what to believe, if I die."

This brought Mary back to the main issue, and suggested a bright and clinching question.

"How do you know," she asked triumphantly, "if you don't believe in Jesus, that you'll be anywhere, or believe anything, after you're dead? He's the one that has brought immortality to light for us."

Mary was not only well versed in Scripture, but was also a constant hearer of the preached word.

"I *don't* know," said Leo; "but certainly if, as you say, we aren't anywhere after we are dead, we can't be wretched. How could we suffer if we were not conscious? But it isn't at all necessary to my happiness that I should know how it will be. I can trust God without having my eye upon Him; and if it were needful for us to know any more about the future, we should be told, and told so that there couldn't be any mistake."

"I should be perfectly mis'erable," said Mary, "if I didn't know that I was go'n' to be — myself, and see all my old friends again, and live with 'em forever."

"I shouldn't," said Leo. "I used to feel like that; but now I think I am more at one with the universe. I shouldn't be miserable at all if it were The Will for me to start as fresh in all respects in some other world as I did in this. That would be the most thorough of new

beginnings, and of rests, that anybody could devise for us; and I imagine 'twould be as much of a blessing to some as others think an eternity of remembrance would be to them. We may have lived in some other world before we came to this—I think it's quite as likely as that we shall live in another after this; but if we did, we don't mourn because we can't remember that world and see those friends. Perhaps we have died before, too."

"And you think you shall die now, and you wouldn't be afraid to? Nor of the judgment?"

"Afraid? No. Can't I trust God (you understand now what I mean when I say God), that brought me safely into this life, to take me safely out?—and as to judgment, if that should be, to look mercifully on my works, such as they've been? Isn't it *all* in His hands? Mary, I wish you could know how full of joy and trust true Liberalism is! By that I mean what you call infidelity, you know. Its faith is so much larger than any system or religion or promise! If every one of those things was wiped out, and all the books and deities, it wouldn't be disturbed nor hurt at all; because it's always ready to move as knowledge moves, and glad to let what's disproved go, and expecting some new discovery, and looking to what is behind things instead of at things themselves. There's so much more comfort in that than in hoping in a special thing, like a revelation or an oracle, that is always being shown to be in the wrong, or ridiculous!"

Mary was silent and unconvinced.

"I want special things," she said at length; "like the promises—something positive. We've got to have something positive, as our minister says; and we have got it."

"What if it isn't true? You wouldn't want it then, would you?"

"Yes, I want something positive anyway. If my belief wasn't true, I shouldn't want to know 'twasn't."

Leo was the one to be silent now, thinking how odd it was that anybody should want something positive so much as to be willing to have a positive lie—thinking how it was that a religion of truth should dread any truth.

"Well, at any rate," she said at last, changing the subject, "I feel certain that if only one be trying to do his best, there can no evil happen to him. Of course terrible things can happen to him on the outside, but his soul'll be stayed all the time."

Mary, though somewhat mystified by all this, thought that Leo's talk sounded rather too religious, after all, to proceed properly from an "infidel," or even from one of those called "infidels."

"See here!" she said, by way of soliciting careful attention, and pausing impressively, "do you s'pose, now, you *are* an infidel—a real one? One o' them that are called infidels, I mean? Because I thought it was more—more horrid, somehow."

It was well that Seth came in then and interrupted.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### A BURDENED MIND.

WHEN the invalid grew strong enough to sit up part of the day and lie on the lounge the rest, Jack, as had always been his habit, came in often after work; but at present he, like Miss Pratt, had something in particular, though of a very different nature, on his mind, and wished he could chance upon Leo alone. By an odd reversal of Jack's longstanding judgment, he did not now think that Leo's health was in a particularly dangerous state; but a desire had taken possession of him to talk to her about himself — to make her something of a confidante.

He had kept so many secrets shut up within him so long that, although they influenced him entirely, he had almost forgotten that he had them — they were sunk so deep. Since he had given up all hope of ever winning Leo, it had occurred to him that there might be some comfort in talking with her of these things. It would be pleasant to hear what another would think and say about his trials.

The thought, once in his head, would not let him be — the thought that there would be comfort in talking with Leo. He had not fully determined to do so (it still took Jack a good while really to determine on anything) when he happened to find her, one evening, settled down, she told him, for a "meditation," which she was very happy to exchange for his company. "I have driven them all out of the house," she declared, "because I knew they needed a rest from me."

So here was Jack's chance, and Leo's; for she, too, had been wishing she could make a way to say certain things to him — while there was time. How pleasant if Roland had been as near at hand as Jack, and as desirous of a meeting! As for the latter he began to quake when he thought of revealing any of the matters so long hidden. Yet he could not overcome his desire for her sympathy. He directed the discourse stealthily toward the topics he wanted to introduce; but he continued afraid. Still he need not go farther than he pleased, he thought.

Jack was in the mood to-night to rave, generally, against love and marriage, and to say all the hard, wild things that were in his unfortunate, wronged heart. He could do that without exposing himself; yes, that was what he would do. He would put off till another time anything more. He felt relieved, and breathed freer, when he came to this decision.

He recalled how shocked and reproachful Leo had once been when she only heard that his social and religious views were incorrect. To be sure, her own in respect to religion had since then undergone a change, but Jack had scarcely become more courageous; and as he sat looking at his calm companion, he fancied her bristling up now, in like rigor, at the first intimation that there had been anything in his life that she would consider unruly.

Finally the conversation, which had been driving round and round the subjects of Jack's discontented ruminations, came to a stand just where it seemed to wait for an avowal of sentiments by him; and he expressed rather more of those hard, wild thoughts that were in him than, in his excessive caution, he had meant to. Then his pulse stood still.

"I want to know," said Leo inquiringly, "if that skepticism — about love — has seized you? It seems to be in the very air now."



Jack felt as if he had been let down gently from a very perilous height. All his alarm had been for nothing. He became almost loquacious under the genial reaction. Yet when he found his listener quiet after his vague, though ireful, complaints against the present social order, he feared he had been unwise, and accordingly added, as he ruffled up his hair, "I am speaking of what I used to think. I hope I haven't horrified you," with an attempt to make light of his previous earnestness.

"No, you haven't horrified me. I was thinking. Everybody has a right to his opinions, whatever they are, on any point, and to speak them. You have that right, and it doesn't deprive you of it that I don't agree with you at all."

It would seem that she did not agree with him now any more than on that other occasion which he remembered so well, when it did make a difference—such a difference!

"There was a time," she continued,—forgetting, because she had at once seen that it was not altogether true, Jack's assertion that he had outlived these recalcitrant sentiments,—“when I got to thinking almost as you do; but, for myself, that whole thing was settled satisfactorily long ago.”

"Satisfactorily!" Follansbee caught at that word. "How? But then perhaps it could be for you. You haven't seen what I have. But you mustn't censure me, if I don't think as others do."

"I don't censure anybody now for anything. Truly, Jack."

"Wouldn't you censure anybody—me—for *anything*?"

"I don't think I should. I shouldn't dare. You see, I've had experiences that have shown me that we don't always get a true insight into our nearest neighbors. Therefore I don't undertake to judge. I might make a

great mistake, even if it looked impossible. So how foolish for us to sting one another, back and forth, so madly! Of course we must know, sometimes, that people do certain bad things. That's knowledge; but it isn't judgment. We can suspend that. We can be sure that bad things are bad, and not get mixed up in making our distinctions; but we don't know how the people came to do those bad things, nor how much to blame they really are for doing them. It might have been ignorance or inheritance that was to blame; and it takes a sinful *motive* to make a sin. Did you ever think, Jack, that heredity and outward circumstances — those two — constitute Fate?"

"I think some people are fated," said Jack evasively.

"So, speaking of knowing and judging, there's such a difference between the two that as to my censuring you for not thinking as others do, there's no danger of it; and, besides, the more we're agitated with new thoughts the better, I say, only not change the life, of course, until we're sure the old ways are wrong for us, or at least the new ones better."

"Oh, no, of course not change the life!" said Jack virtuously, perceiving that Leo supposed she was speaking to merely intellectual departures from established rules; and for one quick moment he suffered a pang of hopeless regret over his lost freshness, over his relinquished right to assert his purity in fear of none, over his forfeited possibility of ever being unsullied as she thought him.

"When I was desolate," continued Leo, "I used to think a great deal in the way that you say you are thinking. That was after I — wasn't married."

"Yes," a little peevishly.

Though Jack had given up marrying Leo himself, he did not like to be reminded of his rival. Nor had she meant to remind him; but she had done it, and so it seemed best to say more,

"I tell you why I was woe-begone and desperate, to make you sure that I was quite as dissatisfied and inharmonious with everything as you could ever have been; but I came out of your way of thinking. It isn't the right way — not for me."

"And what is the right way of thinking for you?"

"'Twas love that brought me into that state," said Leo musingly, "and 'twas love that brought me out of it. Pure love. Strong love. The best love. I think it's not finding this best love that makes all the trouble. I think it's not finding that that makes us ever take up with poorer; and to do away, as you would, with the exclusive kind of love that we call true conjugal love would be robbing earth, it seems to me, of one of the sweetest of its blessings. One staff, if it's a good one, is a help — I've learned that by not having it: several are a hindrance and distraction."

"Well, it isn't many people that find the one staff," said Jack discontentedly and a little sarcastically, as though Leo's ideas were proven unpractical; "or if they think they've found it, and take it, they may end by seeing their mistake and not being able to *get divorced* from the staff."

Jack was very bitter. What could make him feel so deeply on this point?

"I'm afraid there's too much truth in what you say about not being able to right a terrible mistake, if one makes it," she assented mildly. "Of course I know there is a great deal in this thing to be pondered; but I don't suppose an error repented of was ever meant to be irretrievable, nor people whom nature has really made hopelessly antagonistic to be hindered from going their separate ways, even after they happen to get bound together by mistake. I suppose that every one who makes any mistake, and gains the will to correct it, has a right, if it can be corrected, to correct it, unhindered.

You see I am a firm believer in marriage — so firm that I don't think people who are not married should live together; and no person who does not love at all is married."

"No person who does not love at all is married," repeated Jack.

"And those whom God has joined together in wedlock, no man *can* put asunder, I think. His work of that sort always lasts. When they can be put asunder, it's because God didn't join them together — adapt them."

"Irrevocable marriage," burst out Jack, who had been thinking without following Leo, "is the curse of half that are bound by it!"

Then he added sullenly, ruffling his hair, though in his desperation not much regretting his words or caring what anybody thought of them,—"I want you to notice what I said. I didn't say simply marriage. I said — irrevocable marriage; and that it is the curse of half that are bound by it — I've set the figure low; and I'll stand to what I said. Besides, the ones that are not cursed by irrevocable marriage don't need that kind of marriage to keep them together. They'd stay anyway."

Jack, like an animal at bay, began now to show fight.

"I know what you said," answered Leo justly. "Don't be afraid that I shall twist your words to some meaning you didn't intend. Don't you know, Jack," and she looked archly at him to call him away from his mysteriously unpleasant thoughts, "that my church wouldn't allow me to treat in such a way as that *anybody* who disagreed with me?"

"That must be a new church, isn't it?" inquired Jack. "I never knew of any before that could treat an adversary fairly."

It was plain that he was very much excited.

"Oh, there, now!" cried Leo. "Aren't *you* getting unfair — towards the other churches! Of course mine is

the Church of Investigation. But, anyway, I hope there will be more and more thought about these things we've been speaking of, and more and more discussion of them. I want all kinds of improvement in all things, you know, and if there's anything that comes near to our happiness, and so deserves thought and discussion, I think it's this of love and home and family; for these things are the very citadel of nature and of life. Oh, Jack, did you ever think of it? — if only every single one of us was high-minded, and honorable, and not fickle! How the difficulties about this and every other matter would fade out then! Everything is of *the heart* of mankind, after all. If only that were quite right! Then they wouldn't have to make all these laws for the protection of homes and women — and children."

The tenderest spot in Jack had been touched now.

"Children!" he exclaimed. "It's a glorious protection to children, isn't it, to tie together a couple o' Kilkenny-cat parents, and let the children see the fight go on! It would be hard to find a worse fate for children!"

"Well," responded Leo soothingly, "there are a good many open questions about all this for the future to settle. Of course, I don't pretend to be able to settle them. Only I'm pretty sure that marriage, along with other things, is of the heart, and that if there's no marriage in the heart there's none anywhere; and it's worse, I should imagine, for the children that are kept in these homes where there's no atmosphere of affection than it is for the married ones themselves."

She knew for herself that it was at least bad enough for such children.

"Still it might not prove altogether easy to remedy their wrongs," she continued; "and it wouldn't do not to have any provision made for taking care of the poor babies and protecting the community! — and of course it has a right to demand protection."

"There might be laws made for more easily divorcing parents that are miserable together,—so miserable, I mean, that there's no hope of betterment,—and requiring them to make suitable provision for the children. Parents that would provide for their children in one place would provide for them in another."

"It would seem so, certainly."

"That would protect the children, and protect the community, and protect everybody, I should think, if it's protection that the fogies want. Excuse me—I don't mean you when I say fogies."

"No; but I suppose they'd say it wasn't protection to marriage to make divorce easier."

"It would be protection of the right of a man or woman to seek peace; and it wouldn't damage any marriage that had enough of real marriage in it to make it worth saving. It couldn't do much harm to try some such less stringent laws, anyway, as long as they couldn't possibly be worse than the present ones. I say that laws should be such that a couple can know, on entering the married state, that there is some way of escape, if it prove unhappy, besides through death or disgrace. What business man could ever be induced to form a partnership in trade if he knew that through all earthly changes it must remain in force? It might be worth while to try a change in the laws, too, just to see if there wouldn't be fewer murders."

Mr. Follansbee was sarcastic now.

"But, Jack, wouldn't the wise-heads smile to hear us, who haven't even had the experience of marriage" (Jack pursed up his lips oddly), "talking these things over!"

"Wise-heads!" muttered Jack sneeringly.

"Well," said his companion, "I suppose that science will finally make the laws, don't you?"

"I should hope so," morosely.

"Don't you think it's a consolation, when we feel sick

at sight of the great majority standing on the side of cowardice and superstition and bestiality, in so many things of every sort,—I'm not speaking now particularly of marriage,—to reflect that when the human heart is spiritualized the laws will be spiritualized? The few who have advanced beyond the majority can be perfectly sure that that change will come sometime. It's just as certain to come as humanity is to continue. Evolution—what a shining word that is, Jack! When I am not happy in the thought of what evolution is bringing to the race, it is because in the present gloom I forget the future glory. But no narrow man, nor set of men, can hinder the slow—but eternal—march of progress on all hands."

"It's too slow to suit me."

"I suppose it's just as swift as the soul of humanity at large. I suppose that the laws of a people are quite a fair measure of the soul of a people—of the soul of the majority of a people, I mean, of course. Do you read the Bible, Jack?" Leo asked the question with the old childish abruptness.

"No," said Jack, "I don't care for it—not even as literatooor."

"I don't have to read it," said Leo, smiling. "I remember it."

"All of it?" and Jack laughed, though a little grimly on account of his recent grim thoughts.

"Not quite all of it; but it's a fancy of mine, as I sit or lie here, to make—sermons."

"I hope they're better than most of such stuff."

"Didn't you ever hear a good sermon?"

"Never!" said Jack ferociously.

"Well, then, I won't say sermons. I'll say it's a fancy of mine to make myself a sort of Bible commentator. I guess, though, that the real commentators wouldn't agree with my interpretations."

"So much the better!" said Jack, whose courage was

still rising. "Whatever comments are opposed to theirs must be all right!"

"Nonsense!" said Leo. "But I like to think that a time will come, far off, when there'll be only one law in all the world; and that one won't be made in the legislature nor written in statute books."

"That time *will* be far off," commented Jack.

"You know it speaks in the Bible about the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations."

"I don't remember the whole of the Bible, as you do," said Jack, simulating sarcasm.

"I like to think the tree is nothing but Love. No particular kind of love, but Universal Love. That would include every particular love. The only place where you can write that law,—the law of love,—and have it amount to anything, is on our hearts, on everybody's heart."

"It strikes me you're getting your tree of love and your law of love all mixed up, aren't you? Is this one of your sermons? If so, it's no wonder you're mixed: there's never any logic in sermons. But how soon do you propose to have this said law of love written on everybody's heart?" Jack asked the question with playful irony.

"Now, Jack, you know that if it *were* written there, everything in this world would come right. You mustn't laugh at my Great Reform."

"I'm not laughing at your Great Reform. I'm thinking of its distance from us."

"If everybody loved everybody, there couldn't be any murders, nor any thefts, nor any hatreds, nor any wars, nor any wrongs of any sort."

"That's a big If," remarked Jack.

"Yes; but I like to think that Love is just the tree that will heal the nations, and that the law of love is the same law that Saint James speaks of as the law of lib-



erty; because if the law of love were in operation no other law would be needed, and so the law of love would be a law of liberty from all other laws. But wouldn't the commentators be amused at my fanciful ideas?"

"No, they wouldn't be amused. They'd have you burnt at the stake."

"Oh, not in these modern days! See what a gain this same law of love has made in just the last two or three hundred years! It has written itself already, or written itself in part, on so many hearts that we shan't have any more literal burnings. They only mistranslate and black-list you now."

"Why don't you say vilify and exile?"

"Oh, because I'm trying to get the law of love written on *my* heart."

"It always has been written there," said Jack, with honest fervor.

"In your imagination! But I say that every law and every reform is comprised in just this Universal Love. See how it would work in everything! See how it would run out into details here and now! Suppose everybody loved poor people, sick people, old people, troublesome people —"

"How can they?" broke in Jack.

"You're one of the troublesome people, to interrupt me when I'm telling you about my Great Reform!" said Leo, with mock severity. "Suppose everybody loved feeble-minded people, helpless people, criminal people, drunken and unfortunate people; loved, in short, every uncomforted and defenceless creature everywhere—"

"Can't be done! You're asking too much."

"Evolution, Jack! You forget that. The healing of the nations, and of the individuals too, is all in such a little nutshell—Love! But at first we were talking only about the love that should be in marriage, and here I have given you a ser—lecture—on —"

"Everything," put in Jack humorously.

"No, I brought it down to just *one* thing, *one* law —"

At this point Jack, who had already this evening well nigh forgotten his usual tactics of concealment, came very near passing his uttermost limit of prudence and expressing his unwillingness that there should be much of any interference of law with marriage, of which they had been specially speaking; but he restrained himself, and Leo was too far from entertaining such hostile thoughts as his to guess what was his real position in this matter. So she went on unsuspectingly:

"But as to marriage, Jack, they never'll be able to improve upon having one true heart to go with us through life, and to love us from *faithfulness*, and to honor us openly and lawfully before all. They never'll be able to improve on the comfort of that."

"I don't think they will," said poor Jack sincerely; but he added more sadly, "I never could find that one."

"You and I, then, are nearly alike in that," said Leo gently. "I never found that kindred heart—not to keep; but it's worth waiting for, and holding ourselves clean and pure for, if it ever should come. I wonder if I can remember for you a little bit of poetry that I saw somewhere, and learned because I liked it so well," and she slowly repeated:

"Serene, O friend, fold thou thy hands and wait,  
Nor care for adverse wind, nor tide, nor sea.  
Thine own shall come to thee. By night or day,  
Sleeping or waking, they, the friends thou seek'st,  
Are seeking thee. Thine own shall know thy face.  
Behold, the stars come nightly to the sky,  
The tidal wave returneth to the sea,  
And neither time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,  
Can keep thine own away from thee."

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### AN OLD FRIEND.

It was a number of days after this that a great surprise came to Leo. She was worse that morning, and lay, white and feeble, on the lounge. The spring sunshine, which is like no other, was on the house and in the room. On the other side of the hill the falling cherry-blossoms were once more littering with fairy litter the pleasant yard of the familiar house, and Miss Stuart, somewhat older grown, was digging about a little with her tiny hoe.

Utopia was more quiet than at some times, for the urchins were in school, whence the sounds of their recitations came droning through open windows and mingled with the more distant ones of laboring steam in the New England Machine. These last were beginning now to hint of heat and discomfort, as in Winter they hinted of cheer and activity. Flitting birds, very busy, were darting harmless lightning from their sun-smit wings, and a traveling tinman, largely invisible under his load of bright wares, was passing in a blaze of kingly glory. Downstairs Mrs. Dayne, going about her forenoon work, could be heard crooning over and over —

“‘Oh, that will be joyful, joyful, joyful,  
Oh, that will be joyful,  
When we meet to part no more.’”

On to the sunny wooden doorsteps, where some flies buzzed contentedly in the warmth, came a foot, and on

the door a peculiar rap which suggested to Leo somebody in her past, she could not tell whom; but she felt that some visitor more than common was standing without.

Her pallor was instantly gone. She had been thinking all the morning of Mr. Thayer — in fact, had waked with him in her thoughts. She opened the door and he stood before her.

Startled at her changed appearance, the man could hardly speak for a moment. Then they grasped hands.

He knew that he had come to the house of death. The quick rose on the cheek had not deceived him — it was the flush of the dawn of eternal life. His fresh eyes had seen the truth to which her familiar associates were more or less blinded; and she knew that he had seen it.

They were a long time together, these well-acquainted friends. They talked first about ordinary things, as people must. Leo learned that Mr. Thayer was agreeably situated, that his wife's health was improved, and that he was here to attend a church convention in the neighboring city, and to visit his old parish. Having asked after Miss Dayne and heard of her illness, he had come to her as soon as possible. He must return home in a day or two.

"Yes," she said, looking steadily into his eyes. "I am glad I could see you. It is the greatest pleasure, save one, that I could have before I die."

"Then you know?"

"Yes, I know. I shall soon be gone."

Then succeeded a long, long conference on extraordinary things. Then it was that friend beheld friend more clearly than ever. Then it was that the clergyman saw for the first time a dying renouncer of Christian doctrine: too firmly renouncing, too serenely peaceful, too kindly affectioned, to fit into his philosophy. Then it was —

though not the less holding, for himself, with both white hands, to church and cross and book — that his good, cramped heart took its most profound lesson in fellowship, its deepest breath of religious expansion. Then it was that there blazed in new and startling meaning before his eyes a certain saying of his clear-sighted master, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father." Then it was that he found that for the liberal, Liberalism is better than anything less liberal; that for the reasonable there is no faith so good to die by as a reasonable faith. Then it was that he saw an instance of "that deep religious sentiment which is to mere dogmas what the immensity of the starry heaven is to the vaulted roof of a church." Then it was that the unauthorized thought gleamed for an instant on his mind that God must have some way of finally saving such sweet souls as this. Then it was that Leo, walking fearlessly out to the misty border beyond which no mortal companion can accompany the traveler, knew the comfort of being attended a little way on the mighty journey with unassuming words and loving human farewells.

In the great hours it is humanity that triumphs, not the puny differences that divide it. Going with a summoned soul out on the road to meet the tongueless messenger to whom we must deliver over our charge and turn back for a while to await our own call to the same sealed experience, we bring with us thence larger thoughts of our common lot, our idle surmisings, our inadequate conceptions, our upstart theories, our presumptuous dogmas, our arrogant bigotries, our foolish positiveness, our furious quarreling, our narrow judgments. These things sink to their proper value, and look mean before the facts of life and death and mystery; because we are mortal; and because we are all caught together in the same pa-

thetic, unsought existence, and are moving involuntarily to the same inevitable end; one government over us all; one herald gathering us all: and perchance there grows in us that conviction which is the highest of all the praises ever paid to Omnipotence, "It must be that ALL will be well!"

So the friends communed long and closely, standing together in the shadow of death, into which one must penetrate yet more deeply, and the other not yet. Before he went away the minister ascertained what was the one thing that could please Leo more than his own opportune visit.

"If I could only know, before I go, whether Mr. Stuart is reconciled to me — that he bears me no ill-will. It could do no harm for me to know that, now that I am dying. . . But probably it cannot be," she said. "It is hardly likely that he, as well as you, will be coming home just now; and a little later I shall not be here."

"Oh, my child!" said Mr. Thayer; and he took her hand in his and remained silent awhile.

How he wished he could tell her what he knew: that Mr. Stuart was free now! He had very soon heard that from his old parishioners, as also of Leo's illness. But he checked himself in season. He did not know what Mr. Stuart's feelings for her were. He fervently hoped that these two, who had lost each other in the mists of life, might find each other now in the clearness of death. He remembered with sorrow the part he had unintentionally played in their separation, and he longed to be the one to inform Leo that she had a perfect right even to request Mr. Stuart's presence, if she chose; but, upon second thought, he concluded that she would not be likely to do this. Besides, if she did and Mr. Stuart made no sign, she might be disturbed. Mr. Thayer saw that he must keep on the safe side. Still holding her wasted hand, he said tenderly:

"Poor child! God has seen fit to give you tears to drink in great measure, has He not?"

"At least, my life seems much longer to me than it really has been," said Leo, smiling a little tearfully. "Not that I would complain; and twenty-six years — yes, almost twenty-seven now — is a long time."

So the pleasant-painful interview drew near a close, Mr. Thayer promising to come again the next day.

"Well," said Leo lingeringly, "if I should — not be here —"

"Surely," he broke in agitatedly, "you do not think the great change will come so soon!"

"I look for it at any time," she said, "at any moment. The hemorrhage, you know. It comes often — a little. I have told them all to be prepared, but they will not see, will not believe; and the doctor is very reticent. It would be better if he were not. I am afraid they must be taken by surprise at the last. Poor Seth — and poor mother!"

Mr. Thayer had known how little sympathy there formerly was between Mrs. Dayne and her daughter; and he said —

"Then you and she are happier now?"

"Oh, yes! And I blame myself so much for ever having blamed her at all! She has said a great deal to me since I've been sick, and I think there has been some sad experience in her life, I don't know exactly what!"

Leo paused. She remembered, as well as if it had been only a week ago, that distant day when she tore passionately through her native village, basking itself in the sun, and rung Dr. White's pompous-seeming bell, which jangled alarmedly close at hand. Then she thought of the later day, after her father was asleep in that very burying-ground on the side-hill where she would so soon be laid, when Dr. White had come to their house

and her mother and he had stood a moment at the door, and her mother had said, "Here there is no consolation but to continue in the strait and narrow way of God to the end."

"How right is the injunction 'Judge not'!" she exclaimed. "My mother has been living a sternly dutiful life,—I am sure of it,—disregarding all her inclinations for conscience' sake, perhaps for her children's. Her trial has made her what she is. How little we know of one another here!"

"How little!" echoed Mr. Thayer, and was going.

"This," said Leo, "may be our last meeting—we cannot tell; and I have something to ask of you—a message to leave, if you are willing?"

There was no need to ask that.

"Then, if you should ever see—Roland, and he inquired for me, and you should get the idea that it would comfort him to know that I loved him all the time through, tell him I sent word that I did, as dearly as he could ever wish in any moment of his life."

"Yes," said Mr. Thayer, "yes." It was all he could say.

But when he got out of doors among the bells of noon, he did not think Leo would die so soon as she seemed to anticipate. How secure of life we feel so long as there is breath! Consumption was usually a slow disease, he reflected; and he resolved to write to Mr. Stuart at once, mentioning Miss Dayne's condition and suggesting the possibility that she might like to see him.

That much could hurt nobody, though it might look a little odd to Mr. Stuart, who was not in correspondence with Mr. Thayer. The latter was a gentleman of quiet good-taste and with a nice sense of propriety, to whom it was trying to have to do anything strange or bold; but this letter might save Mr. Stuart long regrets and bring



into Miss Dayne's dying hour a great satisfaction. So it must be written; and it was written before night.

He might have saved himself the trouble. Even while he was writing that she was ill, behold! Leo was going out of ill. While he was writing to bring human comfort to her bedside, behold! a greater than he was bearing her away, at last, out of the need of human comfort.

Seth was holding one hand and her mother the other, the tearful "little fellow" near.

"Oh, Leo," groaned Seth, "don't die! I can't bear it! You're all I've got to live for."

"Poor brother!" she answered feebly. "Don't cry. My going is all right. If we make ourselves at one with the inevitable, it doesn't hurt us. If we don't allow ourselves to want anything that it isn't The Will for us to have, we can't be discontented."

"I know you going'll be gain to you; but it ain't to me. I've always thought I should have a chance to make—a home for you the last part o' your life. I was going to make you—happy. I wanted to make up to you for what—you've suffered; and now—now—"

"Think, dear, that we never could be quite happy here. You know you always wanted me to move away from Utopia. Now just think that a way has come for me to go—a good way. Look at it so."

"Oh, if I'd only taken you away—that time, long ago! I could have done it; but I didn't think so then, I didn't see it then. Earth's so wide! I could have taken you out of what's brought this. We could go far off—now," murmured poor Seth, who felt that if Leo were only well again he could and would do anything and everything, and perceived, as we are wont to do when it is too late, wonderful possibilities.

So the hours of Leo's last day on earth were wearing away. Tender words were spoken between mother and

daughter, and between Luke and Leo. Poor little fellow! When he moved away, would it be to a region where he would lay down the cross of being a little fellow, and take up the crown of a manhood grand and fair—a region where perchance, O Maker! Thy sad mysteries shall be justified?

"Don't be hard with mother, ever, after I'm gone," Leo whispered to Seth once during that afternoon.

She had spoken like this before since her illness. Seth promised he would not be as he had been too often.

"Because," Leo whispered, "we don't know her. And, Seth, forgive everybody."

Seth knew whom she meant.

"This is only our first remembered time trying to live here on the earth. What wonder if we do make a sad piece of work of it? And forgivenesses are what one never regrets."

At the close of the day Mr. Thayer was walking away from the postoffice after mailing his letter. He met Seth Dayne. The deep sadness of his aspect struck the minister. Seth raised his hat, without change of expression, and passed on. Mr. Thayer could not let a face like that go by him. He wheeled and followed, and, overtaking Seth, laid his hand on the stricken brother's arm.

Seth turned and a great quiver went over him. "She is gone," he said tremulously.

"Come with me," said the minister; and putting his arm through that of the mechanic, they went thus till they came into the shadow of the Church of the Intercessor. During his visit, Mr. Thayer, a friend of the present rector, used, as if he were still in that post, the little room where he had first smiled so benevolently on Leo and she had found his pale hand warm. Into this quiet retreat, flooded now with sunset light, he brought

Seth; not through the door which Leo never would have suspected of being any door at all, but through one which admitted them from the street.

Looking about the red, warm place, "Even the sunlight is bloody," Seth said, and shuddered. "I've seen so much blood! Everything is red!" and he put up his hand as though to save himself from seeing the west, where the sun indeed seemed trying to quench his fire in his own blood. "Oh, I can't bear it, not to have her alive! I need her so!" Then, "Oh, if I'd only taken her away!"—for we may repent as painfully of an error of judgment as of a crime of will.

Then they went out into the shady church, with its empty pews and peaceful air; and the good minister talked low to the perturbed spirit at his side, and tried to bring it holy comfort. The organist came in to his practice, and seeing the two sitting there, and one so afflicted, he played gentle strains; and Seth bowed down his head on the pew in front and wept. Then Mr. Thayer told him how he had talked with Leo that very morning, and how much impressed he had been with her Christian temper, forgetting, for the moment, her doctrinal remissness and using the language familiar to him; "meaning," he quickly explained, "not that she had correct intellectual apprehensions of the truth, but she appeared to me—what shall I say?—*a faithless saint*. Faithless, understand me, only in being unbelieving respecting those things that ought most surely to be believed. She was faithful in every other way."

After this the minister was a little ill at ease. He was a scrupulous being, and would not, for a world, give a particle of encouragement to any to undervalue the importance of "correct intellectual apprehensions of the truth."

"What I meant was," he resumed carefully, "that it

seems to be God's plan, often, to make saints out of those powerful souls, like many in the Church's calendar, who are capable of committing great mistakes, sometimes great sins, but with such earnestness, oftentimes with such a good conscience toward Him — And then, when they do obtain light, their repentance is commensurate. Your sister seemed to me such a soul — one of nature's royal family, only in a terrible falsity. If she could only perceive that falsity and be brought out of it, how whole she would be! I thought. But God forbid that any word of mine should tend to make it easier for you, or any one, to fall into her heart-rending delusions."

"She *was* a saint," said poor Seth brokenly, with his head on the pew, and too grief-stricken to be very particular about answering Mr. Thayer at all; "as good as any I've heard of."

By this Seth did not mean to insinuate that he considered he had heard of all the saints worth hearing of. It was his acknowledgment that he was not well-read on the subject of saints, but believed the Church could not produce one who, taking everything into the account, would do any better, right along under your eye every day, than Leo had.

"I don't s'pose she was perfect. I don't pretend that," he said squarely, recovering himself a little. "The one thing that was above everything else in Leo was that she had to obey the voice of God as she heard it. She couldn't do any other way; and there never was a saint that walked any closer to it — if that's got anything to do with being a saint."

Mr. Thayer silently thought it had very much indeed to do with it.

"No, she wasn't perfect. If she had been I shouldn't 'a' been —"

Seth stopped awhile.

"Lost — when she was — gone. I shouldn't 'a' been so happy with her. But she was human — a good kind of human. She wasn't too small to make mistakes. She couldn't 'a' got along with me if she'd been perfect. She wouldn't 'a' known how to understand me; and I couldn't 'a' got along with her. I haven't been used to that kind."

This sounded a little sarcastic to Mr. Thayer, and caused him to recall with grief that Seth's experience among the Christians round him had not been such as to prove to him beyond a doubt their superiority to skeptics. He judged it best to encourage this surcharged heart to free itself to him; and it was a surcharged heart, which, if it once began to open, might not be able to stop.

"You are still a believer, are you not?" Mr. Thayer asked gently; for he pitied Seth too deeply not to forgive him the little prick of unintentional, and therefore all the more sincere, irony.

"Yes, I call myself a believer, because that describes me to most folks better than it would to say unbeliever. As quick as you say unbeliever, they think you're in favor of everything that's bad. It ain't so — why, there'd be as much sense in saying that a Christian's obliged to be a hypocrite as in saying that an unbeliever's obliged to be wicked! But you might as well talk to the wind. So I say believer; for it's less of a deception, as I reckon it, than it would be to say the other. If he's our friend," here Seth raised himself a moment and cast his eyes up to the flaming figure, in the chancel window, of Jesus with the lamb in his bosom, "and if we count him such, I don't believe he'll ever split any hairs with us about what title we give him, or what honors. That's what I told — Leo —"

Seth was overcome again.

"I said to her before she came out of the Church, 'You look on him as your friend and brother still, don't you,

taking the account of him and his ways to be true?' For I knew she did if ever anybody did. Then I said, 'Well, now, I'm your brother: suppose I had a big title, should I want you to be all the time calling me by it, and dwelling upon it, and telling me you believed it belonged to me? You know I shouldn't,' said I. 'I should care more for just your loving me than for all the believing in my title that you could do in a lifetime; and ain't Jesus greater than I am?' said I, 'and wouldn't he be less particular about titles than anybody else? He ain't dependent,' said I, 'on anything so small as a title.'"

"And what more?" asked Mr. Thayer, glad to divert the mourner by ever so little from his grief.

"So you're a truer believer," said I to her, "than half that are dozing in the Church with no thought of their own about him anyway, and no acquaintance of their own with him, only holding some opinions about him that they've been told to hold ever since they were old enough to hear anything about him." That was the way I tried to keep her from injuring herself by leaving the Church. I was trying to convince her, you understand; but I didn't want her to act contrary to her conscience, if she wasn't convinced. Neither did mother. Our family has always held that in matters of conscience there mustn't be any coercion. But I had as much call to leave the Church as she had, for my belief wasn't much different; but even if you're on the stand you ain't obliged to testify against yourself, and I wasn't obliged to do something that would hurt me and make people think I was worse than I am. And that she, as innocent as she was, should go and make herself look black as ink! She hadn't any call to do it, not as I reckon; but there wasn't any compromising anything with her, and no taking everything into the account."

"What did she say to your argument that the Lord

cares most to possess the hearts of men?" inquired Mr. Thayer, who was now interested for himself to have Seth continue.

"She couldn't get over the point that she said I didn't touch at all. That was, that supposing I had, a title there wouldn't be any excuse for her if she should keep saying she believed it belonged to me when she didn't; and she said 'twould be the same thing as that for her to keep on in the Church. Then I said, for the sake of persuading her, 'The thing you're sacrificing yourself for may not be truth, after all, if we saw everything. We don't know much of anything.' 'But it appears to me to be truth,' she said, 'and I'm not asked to be true to what's truth to somebody else.'"

"The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another," whispered something in the breast of Mr. Thayer; and his own heart made comment, as once, when he argued as Seth did, it could not have done,—“Her glory was of the celestial kind, and her brother's was only the terrestrial.”

"That was the way she looked at it," continued Seth, "and she had the courage of a martyr; but it didn't make her high. So she came out, and got herself despised — and forsaken. Now supposing she had been bad? Was that any reason why everybody should stay away from her? I thought 'twas the very reason why Christians should 'a' come. But she was square as a cube. She was snow, and 'twas only the track o' their own feet that was on her. Then they stood off and sniffed at her. She deserved to stay in the Church enough better than some that do stay; that is, if it's any credit to belong to the Church, which, to my mind, it ain't. Look at that Stuart! I tell you, a man that won't be good to a woman that's given him her heart true and full just for the asking, and then can't do enough for him besides, hasn't got much

religion, I don't care what church he belongs to or don't belong to. He stayed and she came out. Which was the best? And not only them, but others. Can you tell God's people from any other people, unless you're told who they are? There's one way you can tell 'em: let a freethinker — infidels, they call 'em, but I don't know as there's any better name than the one Leo used a good deal — freethinkers. 'Because it's good to think,' she said, 'and it's good to be free in it.'

"Ah, but there is no true liberty," interjected the minister conscientiously, "save that wherewith Christ hath made us free."

Seth had his own opinion on that point.

"There's one way you can tell God's people," he repeated. "Let a freethinker try to do any good, or be going to get any credit, and they're offended and begrudge it. They want it all done by Christians. I've seen it more than once. That's one way to tell 'em. You may say they give a good deal, and build institutions. But who fills the institutions — the ones for reforming people, and such like, I mean now? Or the prisons, either? Is it 'infidels,' as they call 'em? Christians are old, and there's a good many of 'em; and so they're rich. They *ought* to do something in the way of giving. But what I want to know is, are they any kinder than other folks, are they any truer friends, will they stand by you in thick troubles any firmer than anybody else? Do they lie about you any less than anybody else? Do they repeat about you, without knowing whether their words are true or not, any less than anybody else? Do they come and try to save you from lonesomeness and despair any oftener than anybody else? — when they ought to be the last people in the world to be influenced against anybody by public opinion. Wasn't it that that condemned Christ — their Christ? It wasn't Pilate. But they never remem-



ber that public opinion may be as much mistaken now as it was then; and nobody's quicker than they are, as far's I see, to kick anybody that it's down on now'days."

"Alas! it is true that the Church is less illustrious than she should be," admitted Mr. Thayer, in a conciliatory tone.

"And they talk about despising the world. Who is it that *does* despise it? The day's gone by when it's Christians that despise it. They haven't anything to lose by being Christians, but everything to gain. It doesn't take much of a hero to make a Christian now'days, for heroism is sacrifice, as I take it. It's unbelievers that come out open that despise the world now. And then if Christians do wrong, it's said that it ain't true Christianity, but the lack of it, that makes 'em do so. Why wouldn't it be just as fair, when freethinkers do wrong, to say that 'tain't true freethinking, but the lack of it, that makes 'em do so? But I guess that argument never's been much used for them. I don't say these things because I find any fault with *him*,"—here Seth looked again at the still-gleaming figure in the chancel window,—"'tain't that; but I tell you rough handling makes a fellow think; and I get so full o' disgust at the rottenness and the shams!"

Seth paused. The gall of the meditative man, who had been thinking bitterly so long, and many a time had held imaginary conversations with the objects of his indignant thoughts, was liberated. This was the discharge of long-pent-up feelings which had not been engendered without sufficient cause. Mr. Thayer was wise enough not to check it; but he regarded the young man sorrowfully. Young man? The clergyman looked at the bowed head with its many gray hairs, and tried to make himself realize that this was a middle-aged man with a woeful history behind him. Laying his hand on Seth's, he only said —

"Yours has been, like your sister's, a life of trial."

"I guess yours has been easier than mine, and I s'pose you never had occasion to think such things as I've been made to."

"No," said the minister meekly. "The more I go about and am shown the distresses of others, the more I suspect that I am a favored, perhaps a spoiled, child of the Lord. Of course I have a great many troubles in myself—evils; but I have so many things around me just as I like to have them, so few that are unpleasant! Let me quote for you what you may have heard from me before—I use it so often: 'God hath made many sharp-cutting instruments and rough files for the polishing of His jewels; and those He especially loves, and means to make the most resplendent, He hath oftenest His tools upon.'"

"I couldn't take all that to myself. I don't s'pose God loves one of us any more'n He does another. I don't want you to think," Seth continued irrelevantly, for he began to perceive that his words had been reflecting, at least slightly, on Mr. Thayer, "that I've meant you in what I've said. I haven't. And I don't speak of the Episcopal Church any more than of the others. They're all about alike, when you get down to doctrines. But you see I was brought up to think that pretty near all the good was in the Church, and when I came to doubt it I took the other side, and came near thinking there wasn't any there; and when I found out that a lie wasn't the truth because 'twas in everybody's mouth I took the other side, and applied it to beliefs, and said that whatever was in everybody's mouth was a lie; but I'm more reasonable now."

"That is well," said Mr. Thayer; "for the partial unanimity that we see now is, you know, only the herald of a time when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess—to one thing."

"Yes, I'm more reasonable now; and as to Christians and folks of other ways of thinking, I believe as Leo did, that God's in one class o' people as much as in another. He don't confine himself, she used to think, to any one channel, not even Christianity, and don't even favor any one channel; as though He had to have us in certain folds before He could find us! That's what she used to say. Then when I got into a rage about the way the Church treated her (never so much as coming to see whether she was going downhill or up), and went so far as to say it was meaner than the world (for I don't pretend that I'm reasonable when my temper's up), she used to say,—I remember it in particular,—'Seth, don't make the mistake of judging character by wholesale. It's something individual. You can't get at it in lots. You can't find high character in bulk anywhere, in the Church nor out of it; but when you find it you'll find it inside and outside without any difference, because God's inside and outside without any difference';—and I believe it."

Mr. Thayer saw that it was not best to defend the Church now. He would talk with Seth, or send to him, hereafter, when it was well to do so.

"Let us speak of this at some other time," he said.

"Sir," answered Seth, in his candid way, "I've gone too far. I didn't mean to say so much. I want you to overlook it. Not that I take much of it back. I can't take it back further'n this—that I believe the Church ain't any worse, as it ain't any better, so far's I can honestly make out, than the rest of people; that is, it ain't any worse unless it's in professing more. I don't s'pose any large class of people is much better or worse than humanity. But what I want you to overlook is the parts that might seem to hinge on you. You've done me good, and you did—her good" (here, as the interview was coming to an end, Seth began to be overcome again with a

returning sense of his desolation), "and I respect you as a man."

"It's all right—all right," said Mr. Thayer soothingly. "We understand each other, my friend. But promise me one thing before you go: read the Bible and pray for light."

"I do read the Bible. It's a good book, a great many parts of it; and you've been very kind to let me go on and not take offence. It has freed me to have it out. I couldn't breathe before, and I feel now as if I should be able to get over hating, and be more calm and just, as—she was."

"Pray for light," repeated the minister; and they groped their way to the door and went out, his soft hand pressing Seth's as they parted on the steps.

As soon as Mr. Thayer was alone in the street he thought of his letter. Could it be recovered from the postoffice? If not, it must be followed immediately by another. He hurried to make inquiry. His letter was not to be found. It had already gone. The United States mail invariably takes away with speed epistles which the writers desire to recover.

When Seth reached home after doing some necessary errands, little Miss Pratt was there. She was sitting in the kitchen with Luke and his mother, and her red eyes betokened that she had been asking and hearing how the sister and daughter died.

"I came to see Leo," she explained to Seth.

He started. That sounded so much as if dear Leo were alive again, the blessing of the house!

In a moment he knew that this her friend, having heard of what had happened, had come, according to a sort of religious custom, to look at the vacant house of flesh that Leo used to occupy. So he took a lamp, and the two went up into the homely best room, so different from

what it would have been if Leo could have had her girlish way, but dignified now by death.

Seth was more able to bear with Miss Pratt than perhaps he would have been before his outburst to Mr. Thayer. Not that he could have felt harsh toward any one in the presence of that patient, motionless face that she was gazing at so intently.

"She looks peaceful," whispered the little woman, with a view to comforting Seth. "It's a good sign to look peaceful after you're dead. I make great account of it. And I understand she died very pretty too—very pretty."

Seth bowed his head.

"I didn't know," continued Miss Pratt's whisper, "as she would look peaceful. I was anxious to see. And there's no denying that she looks," Miss Pratt canted her head critically, "as if she was in heaven. I never should know but what she died in the Lord."

For answer, Seth stooped and kissed his dead sister's lips, fixed in a beautiful smile. He did not say what he thought: "As if the Lord wasn't so large that nobody *can* die outside of Him!" He remembered that Leo thought one way of being strong was not to get vexed with the little people who don't understand you. "She's very little," Seth thought to himself of Miss Pratt, and was silent.

"When'll the funeral be?" she asked.

"We shall carry her home."

"Where you came from?"

"Yes."

"Then the funeral'll be there?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll bid her good-by now," whispered the seamstress. "I shan't ever see her again on earth, but I hope we shall meet in a better sp'ere. She was the best forewoman I ever worked for, I'll say that; and we've all

wished, many a time, we had her back again. . I brought her a sprig off o' one o' my plants. She'll think more of it than she would if it came from the flowerist's. It's the double flesh," she explained to Seth; "and the first time she ever saw it, she was pleased at somethin' I said. It was thrifty, and I told her the reason was because I soaked its feet in warm water. It's as good for plants as for us, I said. Meaning the roots, you know. Well, I thought a multitude o' Leo"; and Miss Pratt laid the offering by the heedless hand.

"Take away the red part," said Seth shudderingly. "It looks like blossomed blood."

She did so, then drew the sheet carefully over the face that had made her glad with its peace, and had parted with Leo for all time.

In the kitchen, "It's customary to have a prayer at the house," Miss Pratt said to Seth, with nice reference to the proprieties of life and death.

"I don't care what's customary," said Seth.

Miss Pratt thought, "How mighty-like men are, side o' women!" but did not suspect anything wrong in Seth; for did she not know him as a "member," and see him every Sunday of her life in the third pew from her in the Methodist Episcopal church in Brackton?

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### A HURRYING STRANGER.

THE branch from Miss Pratt's plant had not withered when there was brought another offering to Leo. It was odd that a letter should come the very next day after she was dead. Follansbee, who, poor fellow! could not endure to meet any of the family, and kept away from the house, looked commiseratingly at Seth when he handed it; because Leo would never read it—Leo, who was lying so still over in the "tenement," whose chimney Jack could see as he sat at his old desk. It was the same writing that had been on that other letter, so long ago, that Jack had dreaded to pass over. This had the postmark of a Western city—Jack had deciphered it.

"His wife is dead. I heard it," he said low to Seth.

Of course Roland had sent this letter before receiving Mr. Thayer's.

Seth knew the hand. His countenance changed and he set his teeth. Then he took the letter and went away. What should he do with it? He did not open it. It was Leo's. It was from the man she had loved. No, he would not open it. It was her secret.

Then he went home, in where she lay. She was sound, sound asleep, but he gave her the letter. He put it into her hand. It burned with the hot words of her lover, her true, eternal lover—true at last; but she did not utter any cry, did not catch it to her lips, did not even

break the seal. Her spirit could no longer move her indifferent body; but there in her hand lay Roland's poured-out heart—poured out even as once she poured out hers to him.

"I haven't read it, Leo," said Seth, bending down over the face that somehow looked sweeter every time he saw it. "You wouldn't want me to; and it don't belong to me to. You love him, I know; and I'll do to him as you'd have me. My way would be different; but your way ain't mine. It's yours to love a body through thick and thin; and I s'pose I should be better if 'twas more mine. For it's a strange world, and we don't know much about it, nor the folks in it, after all; and we're pretty sure there ain't any harm in loving, anyway."

So Leo took the unbroken letter "home" with her, folded close; and nobody knew but Seth. It was with her when she came to the little village cornerwise on the map from Boston, and it went with her through the winding street in which, to-day, her feet raised no detrimental dust; past Dr. White's residence, with Baby, or Bobby,—grown old now, and frostier, and allowed to have his time,—stopping his grazing in the adjacent field to look interestedly after the slow carriages. It went with her into the blinding white church, whose bell was being tolled now for her. It went with her, afterward, down past the little gem of a house that her father built and that Mr. Small now owned and occupied, and up again on to the side-hill where her father was waiting for her. It went with her down into the cool, still, fresh-odored earth that had opened its arms to her.

Leo was at rest. Her fellow-men had done their worst, and yet she was at rest.

And Roland Stuart, sitting in his Western home and waiting for an answer and a bride,—what of him?



An hour after the receipt of Mr. Thayer's first letter, he was on his way to Leo. He arrived at Utopia. He went through the well-remembered little street where, so long ago, he and Bertha had first found her.

The man was half beside himself. His ears rang strangely. Should he be in season? Would Leo be alive? Was it possible that he had not yet been sufficiently punished? Was there to be added to his long and painful contrition a sharper hour than it had yet known? Was he not to be allowed even to speak with Leo before she died?

What! Was this the house? — so still? — no one stirring? — the windows all closed, the curtains all drawn? Roland's lips moved thickly when some passer-by came near him. He knew not what he asked; but — she was dead, and they had carried her home. That was what he heard.

He must go too — he must get to her! He could make her understand — he could tell her! It was as if Leo were still alive, only moved farther away. Yes, he must get to her! Ah! but suppose she did not love him now — did not want him? That was a spectral thought that rose up to vex him. Yet he must go! It would bring him nearer; and action, travel, wild haste, or he should go mad!

Steam was all too slow. Roland could have outsped it. Its wheels flew vainly. He should be too late!

So there came a lone, unbidden mourner to Leo's grave — came in season to bear her company through that first night in her new home — came to throw himself prone by that fresh mound — came to lay his proud head low down, and whisper and sigh and groan the hours away among the graves — came to confess and to pray to the God of quick and dead — Leo's lover, now "beautiful" indeed in his utter destitution of self-righteousness,

his utter remorse and abasement. And no other mortal knew.

Yet who shall say so much? Perhaps Leo herself knew — perhaps even helped to calm, if not to cure, with “waving . . . hands that blessed” him, the tortured penitent’s wrung breast; for it may be that men are spirits. But at all events, in the village where the distinguished-looking stranger who arrived at nightfall was observed to depart in the morning, nothing was known of him or his errand more than Mrs. Thompson knew, who, having met him in the street, declared that she had seen a man “handsome enough to be an angel, if he hadn’t somehow looked as if he was sorrowin’ for one of the heaviest transgressions under the light o’ the suns.”

After a few days the family were back in Utopia. Again Seth and the little fellow went out at morning when the bell of the New England Machine rang, and at noon came back, with only their mother to be in the house with them; but now Seth knew (for he had learned it when they carried Leo home) the outline of that mother’s early history. It was only such a history, in many respects, as one can hear any day. His uncle Hugh, in remarking on “Emeline’s” altered appearance, had alluded vaguely to Dr. White, and afterward had deemed it scarcely more than justice to her and to the physician to make himself more fully understood. This was the purport of his words:

Dr. White had met Emeline Sanford at that time in her youth when she was visiting her relatives in Trenburg, and had loved and won her. Theirs had been regarded as a peculiarly fit betrothal. She went home to prepare for their marriage. Through the secret machinations of meddling persons interested in him, communication was stopped and she was made to believe herself deserted. Pride — and force — stepped in. She

would not be overcome by this trouble, nor allow herself in grief over it. She became the betrothed of Mr. Dayne.

Meantime the young doctor, his mind having been likewise poisoned against her, determined, out of perversity mingled with a subtle hope of reconciliation, to take for the exercise of his profession the very place where she lived, that being, as he knew, a nearly unoccupied field. Having completed arrangements for so doing, and arrived there, his perversity pushed him still further: he resolved to make an ironical call upon her that very evening, to notify her of his neighborly proximity.

Inquiring his way, he approached the old dwelling. There were evident signs of merrymaking in its lighted windows; but he went on, close up to the house, in among the thick and shielding lilacs. They were shielding some one besides him. The very person he sought was there—married an hour ago, and escaped for a moment to toss her wild arms unseen and get her not much valued breath. What an explanation and farewell was that! Then the man, stumbling like a drunkard, found his way back into and through the tortuous country road, and Emeline Dayne went in under her paternal roof, to her newly made husband and her newly loathed duties.

The doctor would have gone away from that locality, but it was inconvenient, impracticable. How do the small barriers placed about our feet—only about our feet—hinder the carrying out of our magnificent thoughts! From that time the two lived as though all this had never been; and Eben Dayne went down to his grave untroubled by any suspicion of it. No soul shared the secret till, a decade later, Mrs. Dayne's wasting heart confided itself to her mother, and she, in her dotage, revealed the secret to Hugh—the secret that Dr. White was the Dr. White to whom Emeline had been engaged; "and," said Hugh in concluding, "mother told me that Emeline had never

allowed herself to be even once alone with him in all her married life, so strict she was not to be tempted to so much as speak a soft word to him that wouldn't become her as another man's wife. Wha' do you think o' that for grit and principle? I tell you, Seth, you've got a mother with stuff in her; and I guess the doctor thinks she hain't any equal, for he never took anybody else."

Yes, "the boys" were back in the New England Machine, with only their mother at home; but she was milder, tenderer, than formerly. The boys felt it. It was like a little bit of Leo left. The neighbors came in more than they used to. The Daynes were recognized as a family that had "had enough"—of tribulation, that is. It was many a month after Leo was carried home before people ceased to remark Seth's desolate expression and unchanging sadness; but it did wear off slowly. He had learned, long ago, to suffer. Now he was learning the next thing—to suffer in the best way: without sourness, without contracted and morbid thought about it.

And how patient he was getting to be with his mother! There was need enough of that. To be sure, she was gentler than she used to be; but there was something "queer" about her. Seth noticed it again and again. Luke, too, noticed. Then other people noticed. Then these latter pitied and said it was no wonder. With such a daughter! The poor woman had seen so much trouble! It had turned her head.

There was no medical help, nothing to be done, the physicians said, but to bear with it to the end. It was a mild form of derangement, scarcely more than a weakness tending to imbecility. She ought to be made as happy as possible, humored and not crossed. This was the professional verdict; and her sons, the strong one and the weak alike, bent themselves to their burden.

She still holds, or thinks she holds, her place at the head of her house. There is a girl in the kitchen to help; but Seth pays her well for suffering his mother to suppose that she and not "the girl" plans and manages. It is several years since Leo went to rest, but her mother seems yet a long way from *her* rest. Seth has found his rest—at least, a very good rest—here: the rest that some find in work, not needing to wait to be taken out of work. His work is not simply the work of hands, but moral work, heart work.

On pleasant days the year round, he may be seen, by those who know where to look, walking out with his mother on his arm. He has an arrangement by which he leaves the New England Machine an hour or so for that purpose. He is now one of the old workmen there, and is privileged accordingly. The tall, straight, stalwart man is very tender of the childish, broken-down, feeble-minded woman whose stay and support he is. Sometimes he picks some wild flowers to make her smile, or takes her to the bridge where the water pours over the dam and boils yeastily where it falls, like that at home, and is pleased if she is pleased.

Let no one think he is unhappy or gloomy or cynical now. He has fought his way out of all that. His is the pleasure of "standing out against something, and not giving in." There is a different light from moonlight in his eyes now—a warmer light.

Believe it, he who brings himself into unison with his fate, who bends his supple neck to wear with genuine submission the yoke of destiny, laboring with as much zeal to embellish it as once to remove it, joying in the little joys vouchsafed him and doing the little good "as we have opportunity," absorbing the bitterness of life (O God, to some how bitter! So bitter that no pen, however studious, ever has told, or can tell, adequately, their

awful history) and transmuting that bitterness into sweet, and this because of a certain noble motive in the soul,—such a man is far from being at the mercy of his foes, human, diabolical, or circumstantial. The looker-on pities his lot, not rightly knowing what that lot is.

In this quiet way Seth Dayne is blessed and blessing and trusting as his years go on. Trusting; never again in the old way certainly—that were impossible; but trusting, without being assured, that good will finally come of all things.

Sometimes in their walks the mother and son come in sight of Miss Pratt's winking house, and sometimes meet the wee woman herself. Then Mrs. Dayne, who is apt to forget that Leo is not still at work for Mr. Chick, inquires if it isn't nearly time for her to be coming, and says wanderingly, "I never could get acquainted with Leo" (a remark much dwelt upon by Utopia as signifying that Leo was a black sheep indeed). "Let's go to meet her"; and Seth answers, "Yes, we're going to meet her, in one sense, by and by. You remember that Leo has gone the way we must all go."

"Oh, yes! I remember. Where"—slowly quoting, with an effort to recall—"there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known.' I always held there'd be surprises there—surprises."

At such times Seth falls to pondering a great many questions as he used to in his youth, and one of them is, what sort of woman his mother would have made if it had not been for her peculiar experience; but he dismisses these topics with his old odd shaking back and straightening of the shoulders. He yields up, now, all the strange matters that life has shown him, with the cheerful and humble sense that the task of taking everything into the account has not been placed upon him.

Mr. Stuart continues to reside in the Western city, and

his sister in the pleasant house on the sunny front of the hill whose bleak back is turned upon Utopia. Once every year she visits him. She would like to be asked to share his home; but he prefers not to have the change. Once when she ventured to allude to the possibility of his marrying again he coldly assured her that he should never do so, and added after a moment, "I am married already—to my beautiful first love, the most transparent, the most ingenuous soul I ever knew. Never speak to me again of this. I am trying to forgive you your part in separating her from me on earth, even as I hope to be forgiven my part in it—after a lifetime of regret."

If Roland is a different man, he is yet far enough from being a weak one. He has sinned a great sin, and repented, and is all the better for it. Sometimes one must go wrong to learn to go right. Touches of the old imperiousness are in him still, and will go with him to the end; but he loves his Leo with all his heart, and knows her for his mate.

Yes, and knows now, at last, that she loved him through all; for, long after that night of anguish by her buried body, and after many another night and day of anguish, he met Mr. Thayer as a chance traveling companion, and listened to the message she had sent. It came to him like a word brought, that very day, out of her grave, and portentous of the future. It illumined the dusty car with glory, and stirred deep thankfulness for the removal of this long doubt. Leo had died loving him.

So he is waiting.

Jack, poor Jack! Poor without and poor within. He was very dejected for a long time after they carried Leo home, and could scarcely be induced to stay at all in his own home at Mrs. Campbell's, where the parrot made him almost wild with crying "Leo! Leo!" and "Good-by!"

He remembered Leo's brave words and brave living,

and they seemed good for her; but he could not make them work for him. There was not any hope for him, he thought. It did not look worth while for him to try for any higher plane. He was not a lion-heart—he knew it and was sorry; but he had got to going the other way and was too old to begin anew, he thought. It was not likely that he could ever be anybody now.

He wished that the whole thing—his record—could be wiped out, and he begin clean again. Must anybody wait for an uncertain “other life” in order to do this? No. Men had gone into places where they were not known, and had begun clean again, and had done well. Jack wished so much that he could go, and test if he could not make something out of life yet, that he entertained a shadowy notion of “seeing about it”; but he did not. It appeared a great undertaking, and he did not know just where to begin. Besides, he might not succeed, after all, in making a way, and then there would be his trouble for nothing; or he might go, and be worse off in some respects than he was here. At any rate, he would defer it for the present.

Perhaps it was too much to expect of Jack that he should see that it did not matter so much about the new outside—the new locality and new people—as it did about the new inside, and that the new outside, though it may help the new inside, is not itself the new inside, and that desiring the new inside, when one has not desired it before, is itself having the new inside.

It was a small commencement, this longing to begin clean again somewhere else, and this giving up of the effort, and this failing to discern spiritually; and Jack does not show for anything very different as he goes, in the accustomed way, to and from his precarious work.

Change is not always repentance, but repentance is always change; and it has come to pass that Mrs. Camp-



bell, still outside of a bone-yard and having opportunity to observe straws, declares, "If ever the' was a change in a man, it's in Jack Follansbee."

We agree to call it well if at last, when the tempests and hurricanes sweeping through and around the growing structure are over, the staging is found down, the building-rubbish blown away, and a clean, firm, new house left standing.

And so this ended story of a few of earth's sad hearts is committed to the foreboded Heart knowing the story of all hearts.

THE END.

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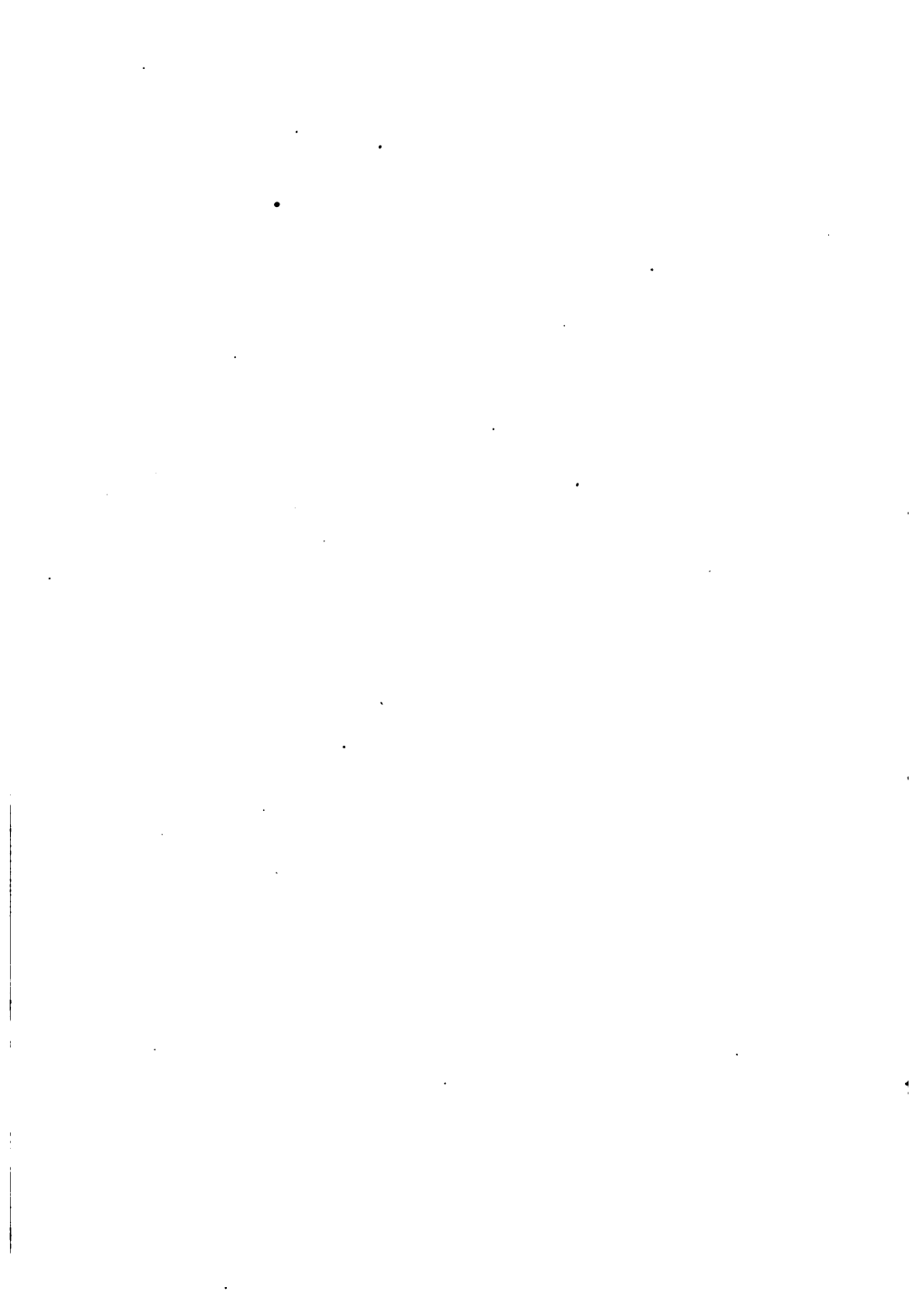
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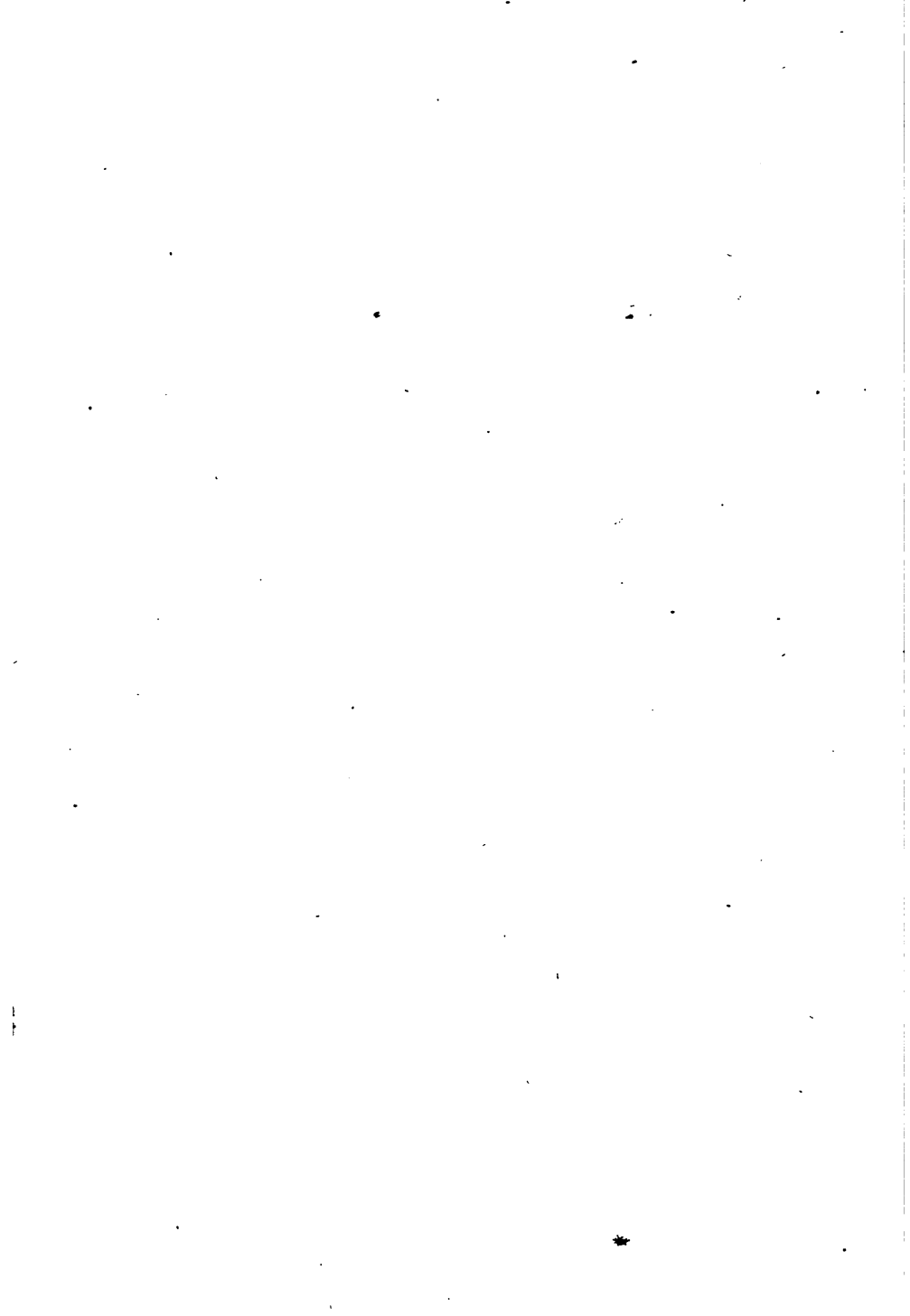
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